BLACK SUN SILVER MOON

4

TOMO MAEDA

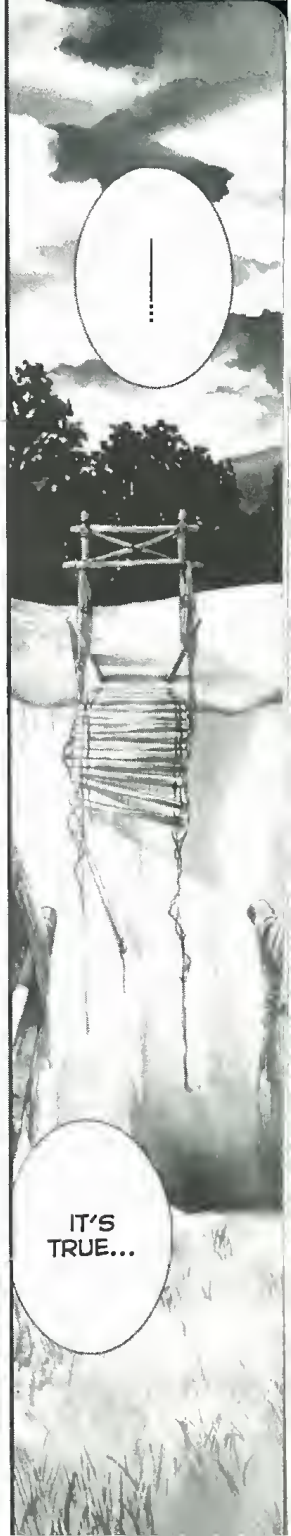
CONTENTS

THE FOREST AT NIGHT IS BEAUTIFUL 005

AFTERWORD 188

A PRANK ...?
NO... IT COULDN'T BE.
BUT...
SHIKIMI-SENSEI?
HUH?
.....

WHAT DO WE DO NOW? NO ONE HERE CAN FIX IT.
HOW WILL WE CONTACT THE DOC-TOR?
HOW? AN EARTH-QUAKE, MAYBE? LIGHT-NING?
IT WAS STILL INTACT TWO DAYS AGO. THE MAILMAN CROSSED IT JUST FINE.
I hope he didn't fall...
SOME-THING ISN'T RIGHT, HERE.
THE ROPES LOOK LIKE THEY'VE BEEN CUT...
YOU MEAN SOMEONE DID THIS ON PURPOSE? WHY WOULD ANYONE DESTROY THE BRIDGE?
HUH?
Well, has anyone suspicious been hanging around?


.....
IT'S TRUE...

YOU GONNA OPEN THE DOOR?
.....
HE'S STILL HERE!
I KNEW IT!
!
IT SEEMS...
...THERE'S BEEN A MISUNDER-STANDING.
HOW ABOUT IT? COME ON IN.

SENSEI?
YOU'RE LEAVING? WHAT SHOULD WE DO ABOUT THE BRIDGE?
?
SENSEI!
I'M...
...WORRIED, BUT...

...ALL I CAN DO IS WAIT.
UNTIL THEN...
TWO DAYS LATER ...
SENSEI!
TURN
...THAT I'M REALLY STILL HERE, RIGHT?
YOU WANT TO REASSURE YOURSELF...
YOU MUST HAVE SO MANY QUESTIONS.
BESIDES...
CLK CLK CLK
CLATCH
SLAM
TOO BAD.
HE'S WAY TOO UPTIGHT.
HE'LL COME BACK EVENTUALLY, AFTER IT'S TOO LATE.
OH, WELL.
I'LL LET HIM TAKE HIS TIME.
He didn't look well.
HE MUST BE EXHAUSTED.
OF COURSE HE'S EXHAUSTED!
WITH EVERYTHING GOING ON, SHIKIMI-SENSEI IS THE ONLY ONE HERE WHO KNOWS ANYTHING ABOUT MEDICINE.
MAKING THE ROUNDS AGAIN? MUST BE TOUGH.
IT'S NOT SO BAD...
Ha ha!
I WILL!
TAKE CARE, SENSEI!

WELL, THINGS HAPPEN SOMETIMES!
PEOPLE GET SICK AND INJURED, AND...
REALLY?
IT'S JUST LIKE DEATH AND DYING...IT'LL HAPPEN.
THAT'S NOT THE PROBLEM.
PEOPLE GET SCARED WHEN OTHERS ARE DIFFERENT. IT WAS BAD LUCK WHEN THAT GIRL WAS BORN...
HMM...
AND IT DOESN'T HELP...
...THAT SHIKIMI-SENSEI IS DATING THAT BLONDE GIRL.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT? SHE'S CUTE.
I'M HOME...
... REALLY?
Er, well...
uh...
!
...HEY.
YEAH, EVERYONE PANICKED...
YOU CAN TELL HE'S BEEN WORRYING EVER SINCE WE SAW THE BRIDGE.
AND MORE PEOPLE KEEP GETTING SICK.
WHAT?
I KNOW IT SOUNDS STUPID, BUT...
YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS ...
PEOPLE ARE STARTING TO THINK...
...MAYBE IT'S A PLAGUE, OR WITCHCRAFT.
Boys can be witches, too! *
EVERYTHING STARTED HAPPENING AFTER HE ARRIVED. THE BRIDGE FALLING, THE ILLNESSES...
ABOUT THE SICK MAN...
YEAH, I HEAR HE STILL HASN'T WOKEN UP.
HM?
HAVE YOU... HEARD THE RUMORS?
RUMORS?
A LOT OF PEOPLE DON'T EVEN LEAVE THEIR HOUSES ANYMORE.
EVERYONE'S SO AFRAID OF THE ILLNESS, THEY WON'T GO NEAR HIM.
...EVERYONE USED TO CHECK ON HIM AND WORRY. NOW...
AT FIRST...

STILL SLEEPING, AS USUAL.
HE DOES LOOK A LITTLE PALE...
...BUT I DON'T THINK HE'S GETTING WORSE.

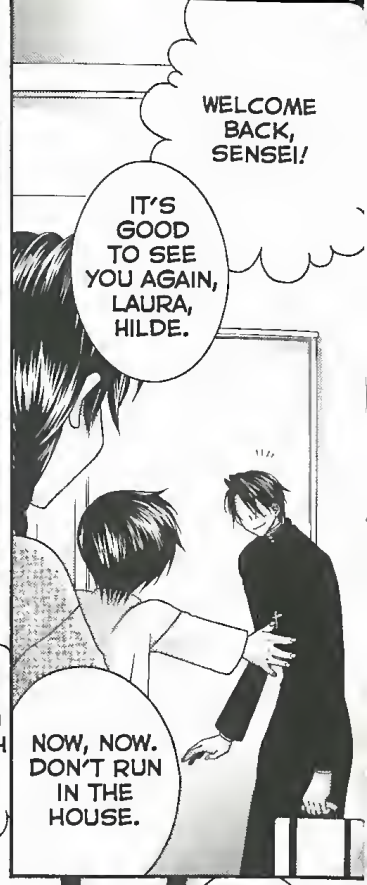
I SEE.
AND THE KIDS?
YES.
HAVE ANY OF THEM GOTTEN SICK?

I'LL GET SOME MEDICINE--
THEY CAUGHT COLD FROM RUNNING AROUND SO MUCH.
ATTILA'S STARTED COUGHING, TOO.
SARA AND SHANI BOTH HAVE SLIGHT FEVERS, BUT IT'S NOT BAD.
IT'S ALL RIGHT. YOU MUST BE TIRED.
PLEASE, HAVE DINNER FIRST.

PEOPLE ARE SLEEPING, REMEMBER. BE QUIET.
UMM, WE PRACTICED OUR LETTERS, AND DREW PICTURES!
WHAT DID YOU DO TODAY?
WE PLAYED WITH BUILDING BLOCKS, TOO!

SIGH...
IT'S BEEN A WHILE, HASN'T IT? ALL RIGHT.
SENSEI, WILL YOU PLAY WITH US?
YIPPEE!
YEAH! PLAY WITH US!

EVA.
I'm home.
THANKS FOR CHECKING ON HIM.
WELCOME BACK. YOU'RE HOME LATE, AGAIN.
SENSEI?
HOW'S HE LOOK?


WELCOME BACK, SENSEI!
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, LAURA, HILDE.
NOW, NOW. DON'T RUN IN THE HOUSE.

LET ME PUT MY BAG AWAY FIRST.

.....
Ha ha
DOCTORS ARE IN HIGH DEMAND.
DON'T TELL ME YOU WERE TENDING PATIENTS UNTIL THIS LATE!
IT'S NOT FAIR, JUST BECAUSE YOU KNOW THE MOST ABOUT MEDICINE...
I ONLY HAVE SO MUCH MEDICINE.
I'M JUST GLAD THE SYMPTOMS AREN'T TOO BAD.
DON'T LIE TO ME.
YOU'VE HAD MEETING AFTER MEETING SINCE THE BRIDGE COLLAPSED.
HUH? YES.
SENSEI, YOU LOOK TIRED.
ARE YOU GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP?
MAYBE.
I GUESS I HAVEN'T BEEN EATING MUCH.
OH?
I THINK YOU'VE EVEN LOST SOME WEIGHT.
YOU DON'T LOOK WELL.

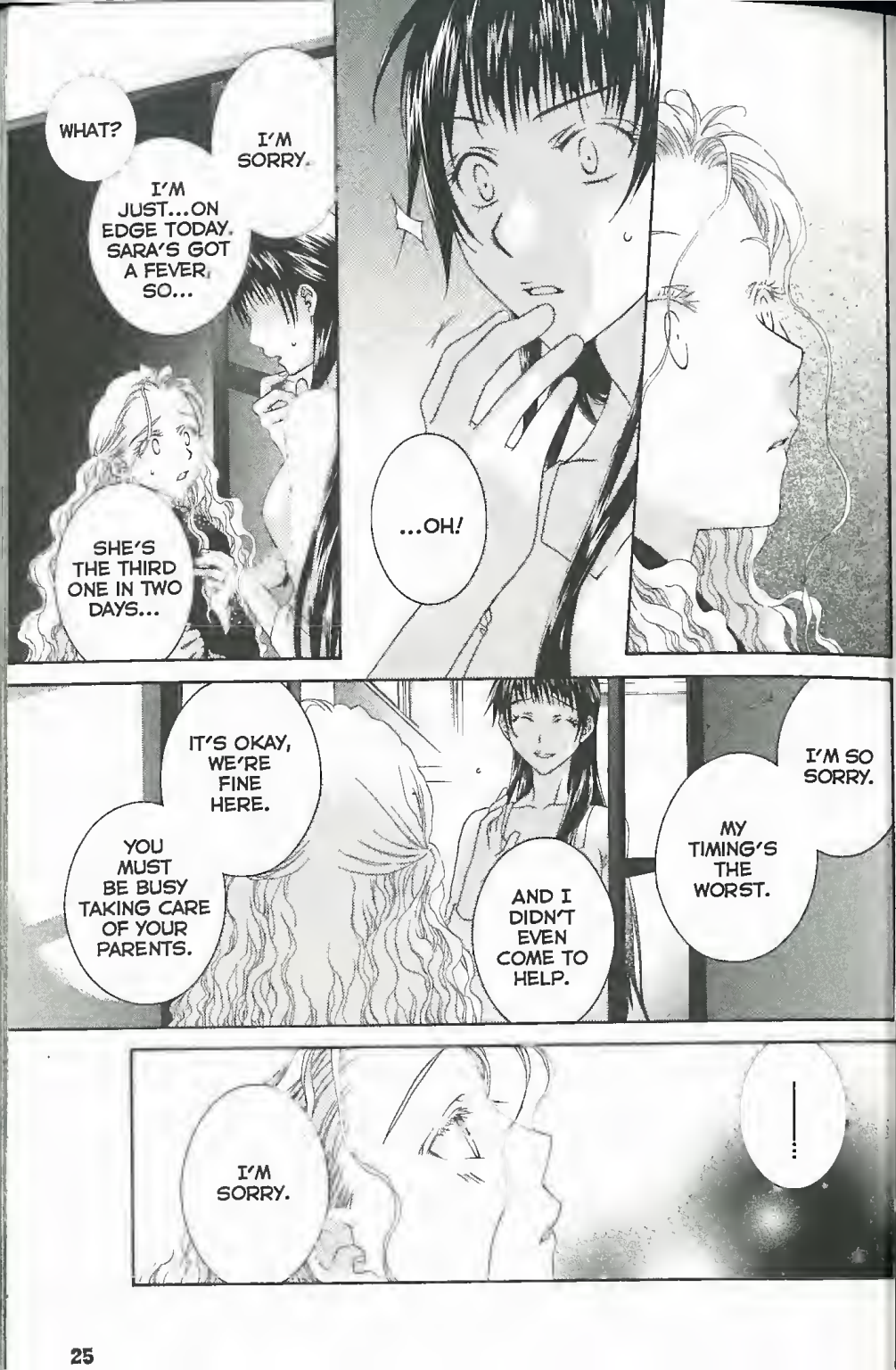
Back to bed!
HOLD IT, YOU TWO!
WHY'RE YOU STILL AWAKE? REMEMBER, YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED UP HERE RIGHT NOW.
Found him!
RIGHT...
.....
I HAVE A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS.
THAT'S AWFUL. HOW CAN SO MANY PEOPLE BE GETTING SICK?
YES.
SEVERAL MORE PEOPLE CAME DOWN WITH COLDS TODAY.
WHAT?
AGAIN?

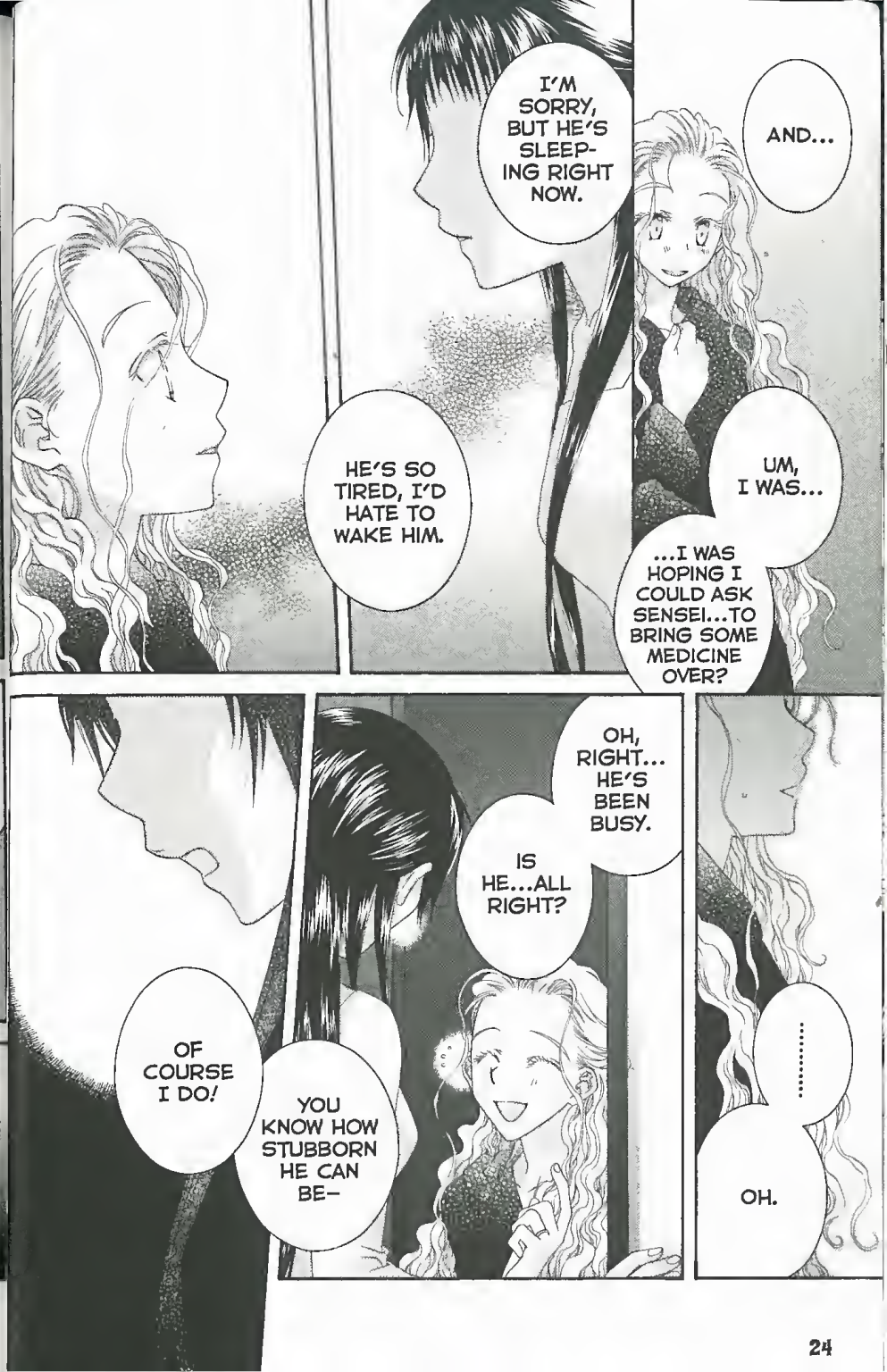
OW, OW, OW!
?!
PINCH
YOU DON'T GET TO TELL ME THAT.
DISGRA ...?
So mean.
YOU GIVE NO THOUGHT TO YOURSELF, SO YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO NAG ME!
Hyuh
JUST EAT YOUR DINNER AND GO HAVE A BATH. I'LL CLEAN UP.
EVA...
WORRY ABOUT YOUR-SELF, NOT ME!
YOU'RE A COMPLETE DISGRACE!
...YES, MA'AM.
THE WATER'S ALREADY HEATED, SO IT'LL BE WARM.
THEN IT'S OFF TO BED WITH YOU!
Understand?
YES, MA'AM.
SNIFFLE
SNIFFLE
SNIFFLE

YOU SHOULD REALLY TAKE A BREAK. I INSIST–
BUT I'M MORE WORRIED ABOUT YOU, EVA.
I'D BE COMPLETE-LY LOST WITHOUT YOU.
YOU'RE THE ONE LOOKING AFTER THE KIDS ALL DAY.
EVA...?

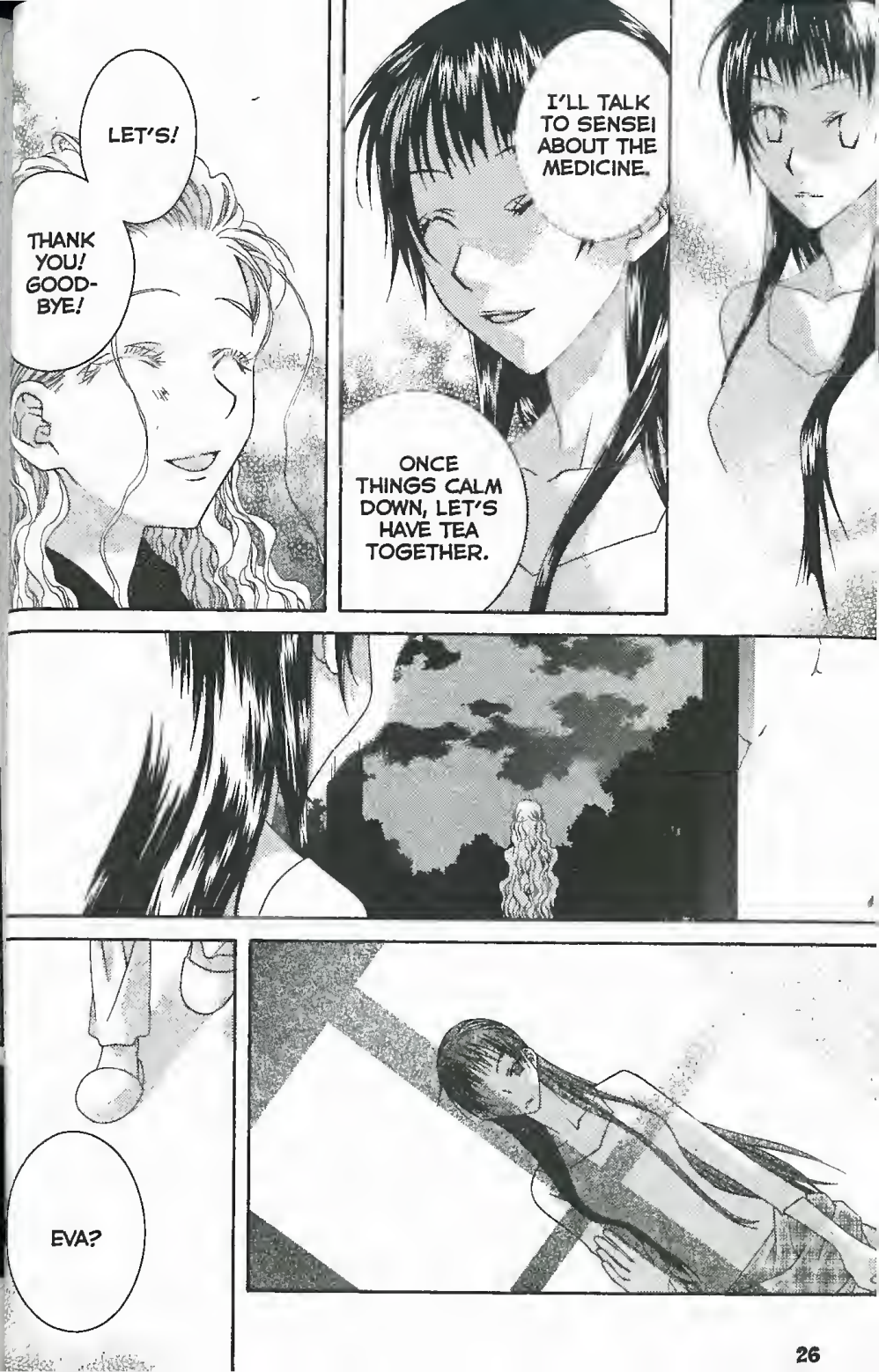
* See Translator's Notes

!
AMARIA ...?
HEH HEH.
I WAS WALKING THROUGH THE AREA...
...AND THOUGHT I'D STOP BY.
I'M ON MY WAY HOME FROM MAKING A DELIVERY.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT SO LATE?
IT'S NOTHING SERIOUS, BUT I'M TRYING TO HELP THEM OUT.
I SEE. WELL, I PRAY THEY'LL GET BETTER.
HUH?
BOTH OF MY PARENTS ARE SICK.
カチャ…
CLINK
KNOCK KNOCK
EVA?

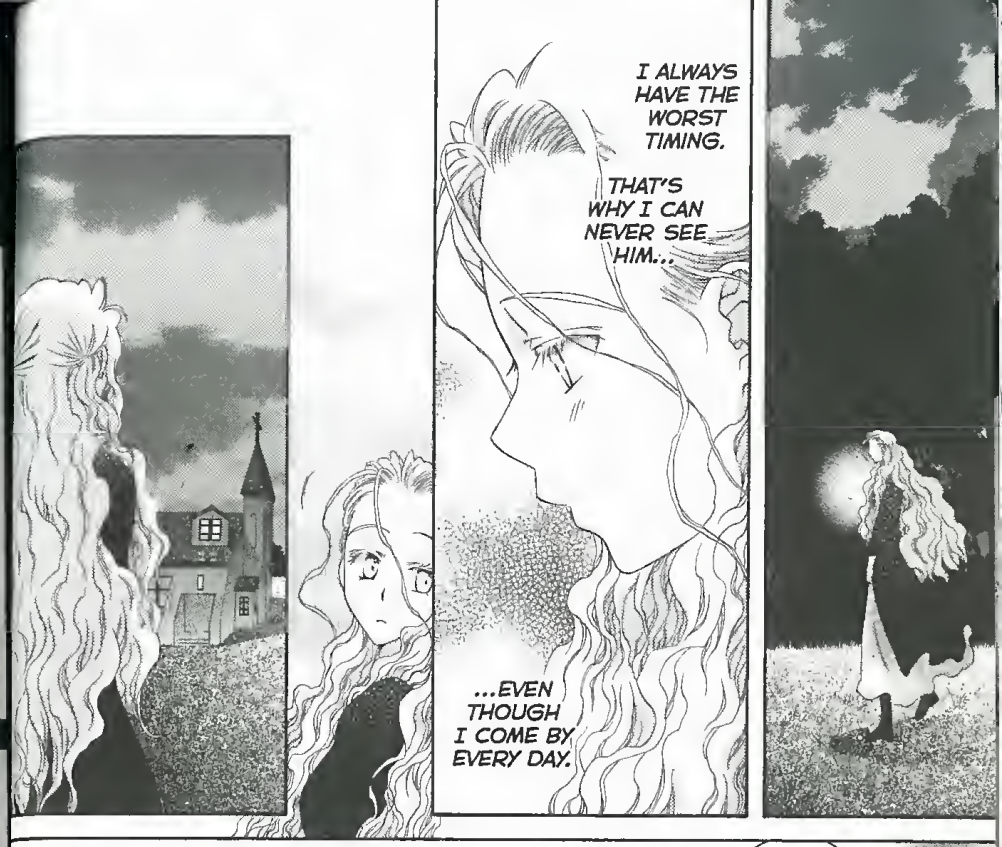

WHAT?
I'M SORRY.
I'M JUST...ON EDGE TODAY. SARA'S GOT A FEVER, SO...
SHE'S THE THIRD ONE IN TWO DAYS...
...OH!
IT'S OKAY, WE'RE FINE HERE.
YOU MUST BE BUSY TAKING CARE OF YOUR PARENTS.
AND I DIDN'T EVEN COME TO HELP.
I'M SO SORRY.
MY TIMING'S THE WORST.
I'M SORRY.
.....

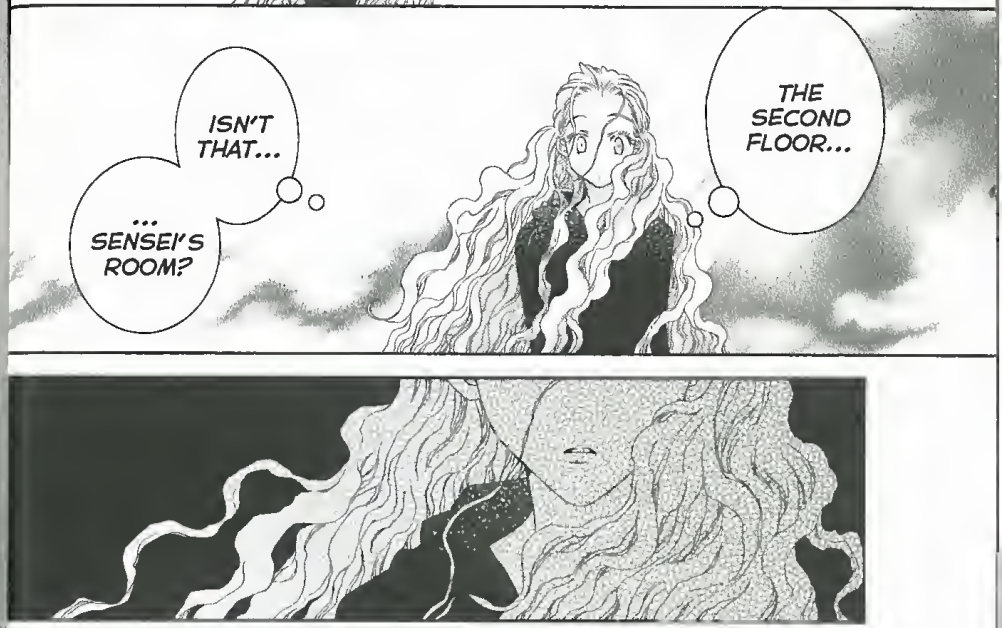

I'M SORRY, BUT HE'S SLEEP-ING RIGHT NOW.
HE'S SO TIRED, I'D HATE TO WAKE HIM.
AND...
UM, I WAS...
...I WAS HOPING I COULD ASK SENSEI...TO BRING SOME MEDICINE OVER?
OH, RIGHT... HE'S BEEN BUSY.
IS HE...ALL RIGHT?
OF COURSE I DO!
YOU KNOW HOW STUBBORN HE CAN BE—
.....
OH.

* See Translator's notes
I'M FINISHED WITH MY BATH. SORRY FOR GOING FIRST*.
NO, NOT AT ALL!
SLEEP WELL!
IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?
GOOD NIGHT.
?


LET'S!
THANK YOU! GOOD-BYE!
I'LL TALK TO SENSEI ABOUT THE MEDICINE.
ONCE THINGS CALM DOWN, LET'S HAVE TEA TOGETHER.
EVA?

HE'S THE ONE...
...WHO FIRST COLLAPSED FROM THE ILLNESS...
THAT MAN...
HUH?


I ALWAYS HAVE THE WORST TIMING.
THAT'S WHY I CAN NEVER SEE HIM...
...EVEN THOUGH I COME BY EVERY DAY.


ISN'T THAT...
...SENSEI'S ROOM?
THE SECOND FLOOR...

...AH!
IT WAS JUST...
...A NIGHT-MARE.
SHANI!
YOUR FEVER...
HE SEEMS TO HAVE RECOV-ERED.
I'LL SEE THAT HE TAKES IT EASY TODAY, JUST TO BE SURE.
HIS FEVER'S GONE DOWN.
AND HE LOOKS HEALTHIER.
MORNING!
GOOD MORN-ING...
OH! SENSEI!
GOOD MORNING, SENSEI!

OH, I'M FINE EITHER WAY.
WHAT'S WRONG? YOU WANT SUNNY-SIDE UP, INSTEAD?
SENSEI?
HUH?
NOW, THEN!
HERE'S TO ANOTHER BUSY DAY!
Yay! Omelets!
HOW ABOUT OMELETS FOR BREAK-FAST?
I'M GLAD TO HEAR THAT.
Phew
I'M SO GLAD.
UNFOR-TUNATELY ...
...NOW IT'S LAURA.
AGAIN?
SHE'S STARTED SNEEZING.
IT WAS JUST A COLD.
I WAS OVERRE-ACTING. THANK GOOD-NESS.
THANK GOOD-NESS.
.....
WHAT'S THIS?
OUT ON ANOTHER HOUSE CALL?
IF THEY'RE NOT BETTER SOON, WE WON'T HAVE THE CHANCE TO MOVE.
IF ONLY WE COULD MOVE INTO THE CHURCH... WE'D HAVE MORE SPACE.
WITH THEM ALL IN THE SAME ROOM, THEY'LL JUST KEEP SPREADING IT.
DON'T WORRY, THEY'VE SETTLED DOWN FOR NOW.
YEP, I GAVE IT TO THEM.
HAVE THEY HAD THEIR MEDI-CINE?

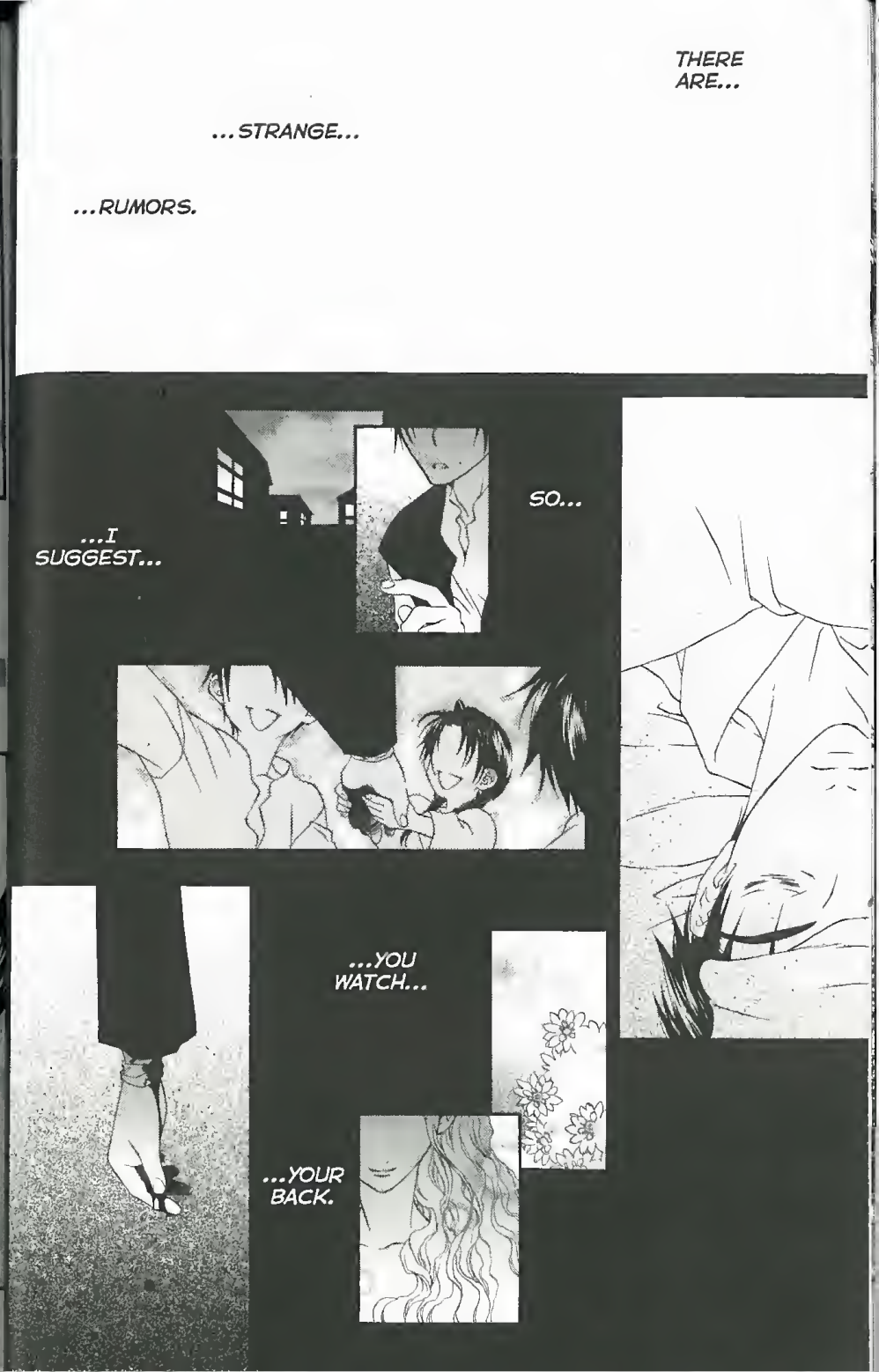
...HAS THE SICK MAN RECOVERED AT ALL?
NO.
I SEE.
YES?
WELL...
HE SHOWED UP THE SAME DAY THE BRIDGE FELL, RIGHT?
AND MORE PEOPLE HAVE GOTTEN SICK...
THIS TOWN IS SUPER-STITIOUS BY NATURE, SO...
...I DON'T THINK IT'S SAFE TO BE AROUND HIM.
SOME STRANGE RUMORS HAVE BEEN SPREAD-ING.
WHAT RUMORS?
THE THING IS...
YES?
NOW, I DON'T WANT TO WORRY YOU, BUT...
I JUST THOUGHT YOU SHOULD KNOW WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING.
I MEAN, I'M NOT TRYING TO TELL YOU WHAT TO DO!
!
AH, BUT WE DON'T HAVE THE BRIDGE. OR A CAR-PENTER...
THEY'RE ALL STUCK IN THE SAME ROOM, SO THE COLD IS SPREAD-ING.
WE REALLY WISH WE COULD MOVE INTO THE NEW CHURCH.
OH! KURT-SAN!
NO, I WOULDN'T CALL IT A HOUSE CALL.
THE EVENINGS ARE GROWING SHORTER. YOU SHOULD HURRY HOME.
HOW ARE THE KIDS HOLDING UP?
IF YOU INSIST...
UUH, WELL, THEY'RE HOLDING.
OH, COME NOW. YOU'RE PRACTICALLY THE TOWN DOCTOR.
PRO-BABLY.
I'M JUST GLAD SOMEONE CARES ABOUT GET-TING THE BRIDGE FIXED.
SO YOU THINK THE CARPENTER WILL COME AFTER THE HOLIDAY?
That's next week, right?
ER, THAT'S NOT IT. WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE REST-ING UNTIL ALL SAINTS' DAY.
I SEE...
SENSEI, LISTEN.
WE'VE CALLED FOR A DOCTOR, BUT NO ONE'S COME.
STILL, I FIND IT STRANGE.

!
.....?
.....
.....!
.....

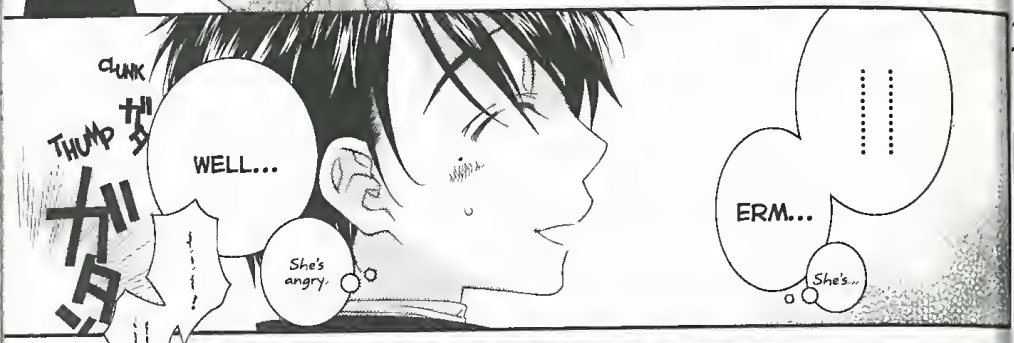
.....
IT WOULD HAVE SOUNDED TOO OMINOUS TO JUST SAY 'WATCH YOUR BACK'.
WELL, I'M HEADED THIS WAY. SEE YA!
OH. YES. SEE YOU LATER.
?

...NNGH!
...HNN!
.....

NOD
SENSEI...
.....
SENSEI!
RIGHT...
YAAWN...
Haah...
YES? WHAT?
HUH ...!?
Wah!
BE CAREFUL, OR YOU'LL GO FACE-FIRST INTO YOUR SOUP-
UGH, WHAT DID I JUST TELL YOU!?
DON'T GIVE ME THAT. QUIT FALLING ASLEEP IN THE MIDDLE OF BREAKFAST!
ガチャーン
CRASH
HOT!
.....


THERE ARE...
...STRANGE...
...RUMORS.
SO...
...I SUGGEST...
...YOU WATCH...
...YOUR BACK.

SO?
.....
SO WHO'S GOING TO TAKE CARE OF THEM...
HM?
Well?
...WHEN YOUR HEALTH GIVES OUT?
UMM...
Okay!
I UNDERSTAND! I'LL TAKE IT EASY TODAY.
.....
THERE ARE ONLY A FEW I HAVE TO CHECK ON EVERY DAY.


CLUNK
THUMP
WELL...
She's angry.
.....
ERM...
She's...

WAAH
CLATTER
!

YOU'RE JUST LUCKY THE SOUP WAS COOLING OFF!
WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF IT WAS STEAMING HOT? OR IF YOU'D BROKEN THE BOWL!?
EP!
DON'T WASTE FOOD!
S-SORRY ...

PLEASE, JUST GO BACK TO BED!
Here's a towel.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT.
I'M GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP.
THANKS...

BUT I'M FINE. REALLY!
ALREADY ROMISED D DELIVER SOME EDICINE...

THAT'S ENOUGH, JUST TAKE THE DAY OFF.
WHAT ABOUT MY PATIENTS?
THEY CAN SURVIVE ONE DAY WITHOUT YOU. YOU'RE WORRYING ME!

I'M REALLY SORRY.

I'M JUST GLAD THE CUT WASN'T DEEP.
.....

.....
THEY'RE KIDS. IT'S NORMAL.
... THEY'VE NEVER TRIED TO HURT EACH OTHER BEFORE.
THE CHILDREN ARGUE ALL THE TIME, BUT...
WHAT ON EARTH GOT INTO THOSE TWO?
HOW'S SHANI?
HE'S FINALLY CALMED DOWN.
SHUT
THIS IS GETTING RIDICULOUS. FIRST COLDS, NOW A HEAD INJURY!

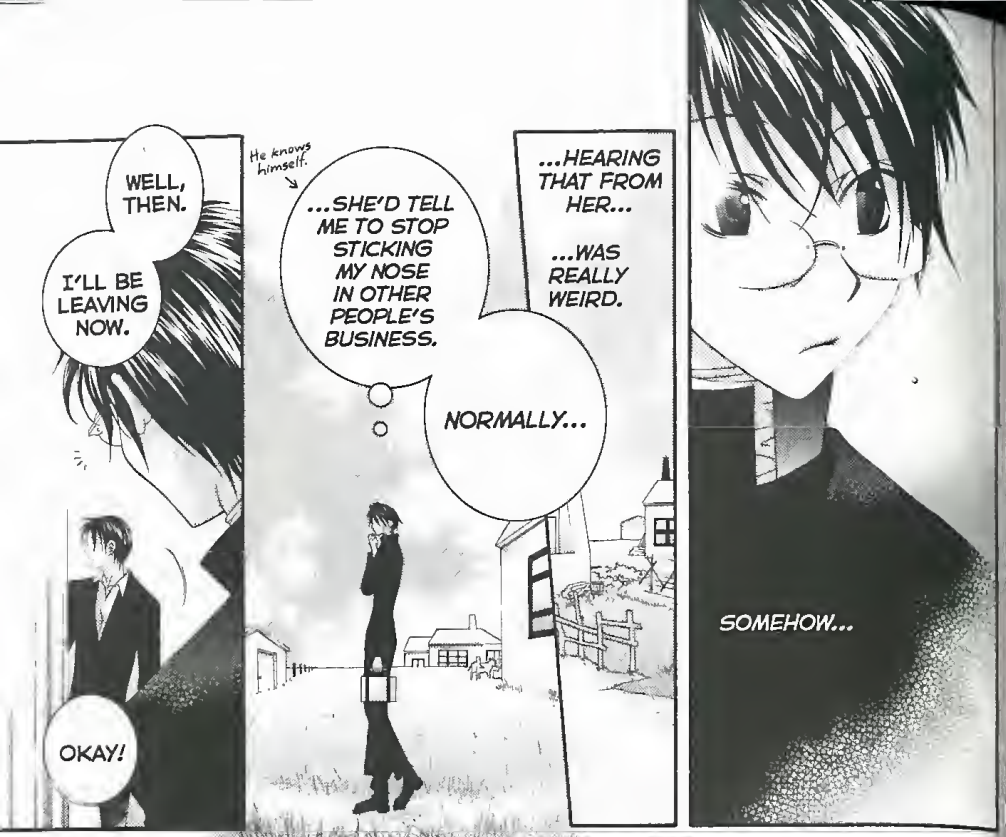
MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT...
I HOPE SHE IS.
FIGHTS ARE JUST PART OF GROWING UP. THEY'LL BE FINE, TOMORROW.
THE CHILDREN WON'T STAY LITTLE FOREVER.
BUT SO FAR...

WAAAH
WAAH
STOP IT!
KNOCK IT OFF, YOU TWO!
CALM DOWN AND TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED.
WHAT'S ALL THE COMMOTION–
!
WHAT IS THIS? A FIGHT?

SHANI HIT ME FIRST!
I DID NOT! HILDE THREW A BOOK AT ME!
DID OT!
SHANI! HILDE! STOP THIS AT ONCE!

SHOVE
SHE'S LYING! HILDE'S A BIG, FAT LIAR!

THUD
AAH!
HILDE!


WELL, THEN.
I'LL BE LEAVING NOW.
OKAY!
He knows himself.
...SHE'D TELL ME TO STOP STICKING MY NOSE IN OTHER PEOPLE'S BUSINESS.
NORMALLY...
...HEARING THAT FROM HER...
...WAS REALLY WEIRD.
SOMEHOW...

I KNOW YOU'RE LOOKING AFTER OTHERS, BUT...
...YOU'RE ALL WE HAVE.
BUT...
...JUST PROMISE YOU'LL BE CAREFUL.
THEN THERE'S NO POINT IN ARGUING.
.....
YOU REALLY THINK SO?
YOU ALWAYS WERE STUBBORN ABOUT THIS KIND OF THING.
ANYWAY, SENSEI...
ARE YOU STILL SET ON GOING OUT TODAY?
BINK BINK
O-OH, YES. I HAVE A PROMISE TO KEEP.

ぎゅっと
SHUT
DART
GOOD AFTERNOON.
ARE YOU OFF TO WORK—
!

!
ER, UH, YES.
BOY, ARE YOU OUT OF IT...
HEY, ARE YOU LISTENING?
HUH?

SENSEI'S SHELTERING HIM BECAUSE HE *KNOWS.*
LOOK.
IT'S SHIKIMI-SENSEI.
LOOKS LIKE HE'S MAKING ROUNDS AGAIN.
WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?
SORRY, I FORGOT SOME-THING.
HEY, HAVE YOU HEARD THE RUMORS?
NEARLY HALF THE VILLAGE IS ILL NOW, RIGHT?
HE HAS TO. THE SICK AREN'T GETTING BETTER.
ABOUT THE PATIENT IN THE CHURCH?
YEAH. THEY SAY IT WON'T STOP.
IT'S STRANGE...
BUT YOU KNOW WHAT ELSE THEY'RE SAYING?

THERE'S TOO MUCH...
...GOING ON RIGHT NOW.
...HE'S STILL HERE.
IF ONLY A RESPONSE WOULD COME FROM THE COMMITTEE...
THEN I'D KNOW WHAT TO DO.
.....
.....

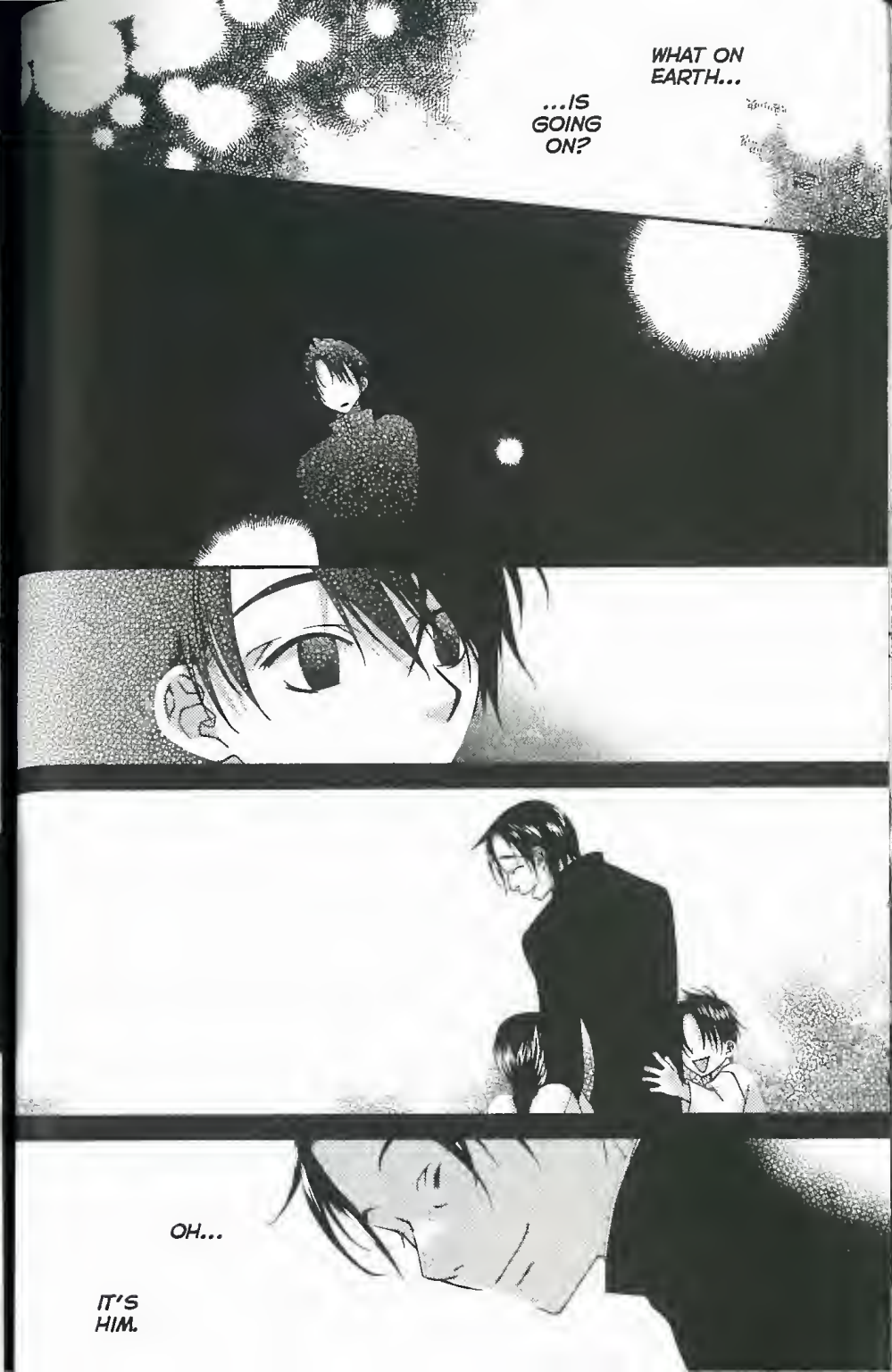
.....
WHAT DO I DO?
IT'S SAFE FOR THE MOMENT, BUT...
.....?
...WHAT NOW?
.....
BUT, CARLS-SAN, YOUR HOUSE IS ON MY WAY.
I ONLY NEED TO VISIT TWO OR THREE HOMES TODAY.
IT'D BE BEST IF I SAW HER MYSE-
I SAID NO!
REALLY...
LIKE THEY COULD BE ANY MORE OBVIOUS.
SENSEI.
HUH?
OH, CARLS-SAN.
ABOUT THE MEDICINE YOU MENTIONED THE OTHER DAY...
OH, YES, FOR YOUR MOTHER. I WAS JUST ON MY WAY TO...
IT'S ALL RIGHT. I'LL JUST GIVE HER SOMETHING FOR HER FEVER.
BUT, I SHOULD TAKE NOTE OF HER SYMPTOMS FIRST...
REALLY, SENSEI, IT'S OKAY. YOU'RE BUSY ENOUGH.

GUESS I CAN'T BLAME THEM, BUT...
...IT STILL HURTS.
THEY MUST THINK...
...I'M GOING TO SPREAD THE ILLNESS.
UM...!
DASH
I MEAN...
...FORGET ABOUT IT.
I'M SORRY FOR WASTING YOUR TIME.
AN ARGUMENT ...?
THAT FAMILY WAS ALWAYS SO CALM...
CRASH
"THERE ARE..."
.....
SOMETHING STRANGE IS GOING ON.
...NOT RIGHT HERE.
SOMETHING'S...
SO THAT'S IT.
"..STRANGE..."
"...RUMORS."

...!
BZZT
BZZT
WHAT!?
.....
FOR A MOMENT...
...SOMETHING CLOUDED MY SIGHT.
WAS IT JUST MY IMAGINATION? IS SOMETHING WRONG WITH MY EYES?
.....

.....
OF WHAT?
AFRAID ...?
FOR SOME REASON...
...I'M AFRAID.
THE CHILDREN...
...ARE HAVING TROUBLE MAKING UP.
OF COURSE I AM.
I'M TIRED.
ALL THOSE NIGHTMARES, NIGHT AFTER NIGHT.
THIS IS NO TIME TO WAVER.
I HAVE TO CONCEN-TRATE...

WHAT IS HE...
...TRYING TO TELL ME?
THIS DREAM AGAIN.
THIS SAME DREAM, OVER AND OVER.
...ARE YOU?
WHO...


WHAT ON EARTH...
...IS GOING ON?
OH...
IT'S HIM.

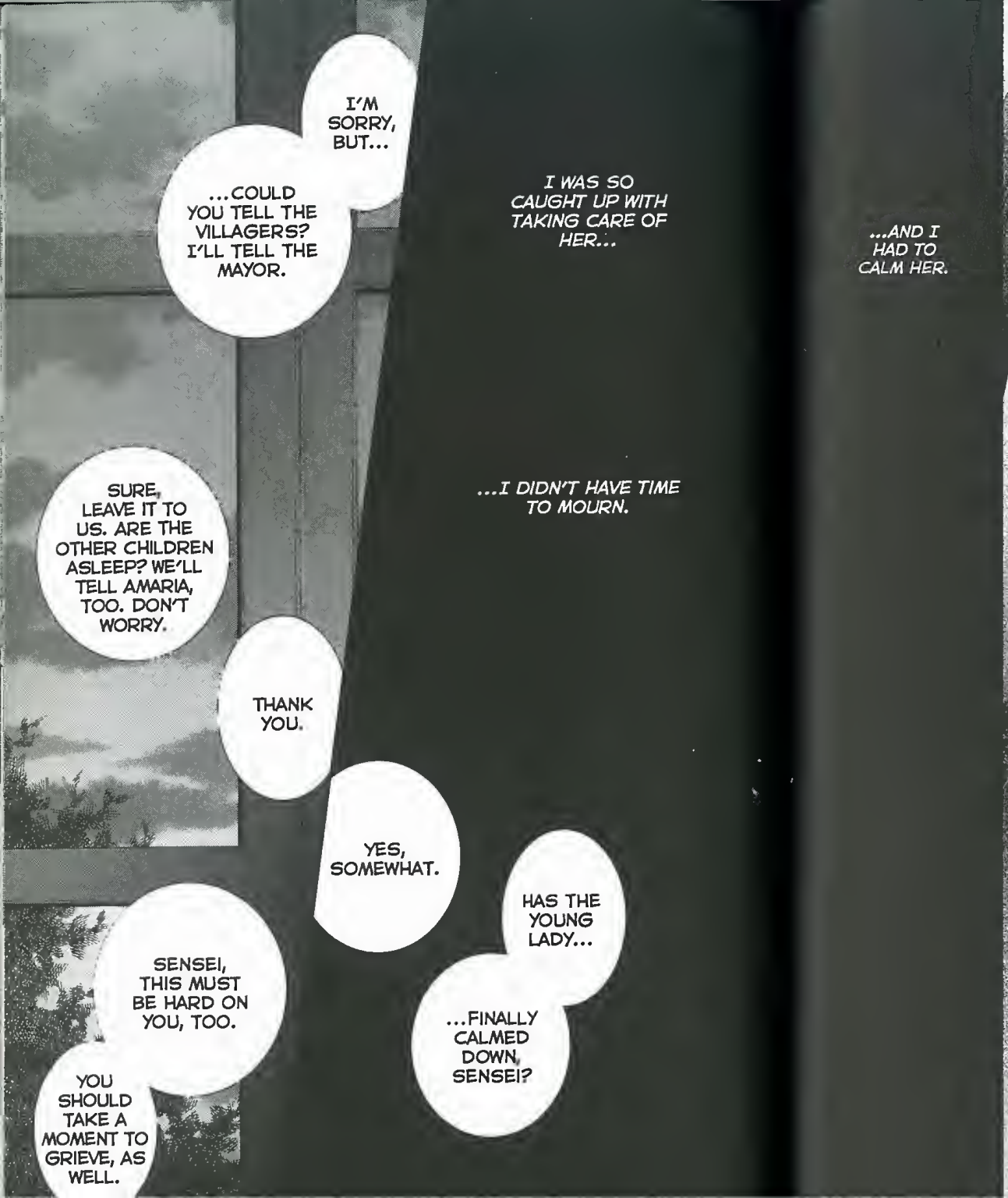
JUMP
ハッ!!
WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
WHAT...
.....!
.....
EVA...?
WHAT WAS THAT DREAM?
HUH? I WAS ASLEEP ...?
HEY, KURT-SAN.
JUST DELIVERING FOOD TO MY GRANDPA.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT IN THE DARK?
Even though it's early evening.
HE HURT HIS LEG, AND DEVELOPED A FEVER.

WHAT ON EARTH ...?
LUNGE
OH, SENSEI!
EVA!?
HE HAD A FEVER, BUT BESIDES THAT, HE SEEMED FINE.
HEY, GRANDPA?
I HOPE SO.
YOU THINK HE'S OKAY?
HELLO? ANYBODY HOME?
HE'S...!
IT'S ATTY! I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM!
THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG!
I FOUND HIM! HE'S NOT MOVING!
HEY!

KNOCK
GRAMPS!
GRANDPA!
KNOCK
KNOCK
KNOCK
KNOCK
THAT MUST BE A PAIN. YOU CHECKING IN HERE, TOO?
HEY!
GRAMPS! IT'S ME!
I TOLD HIM TO COME STAY WITH ME, BUT HE'S TOO STUBBORN.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, NINA?
IT'S MY TURN TO BE LOOKOUT. I'M CHECKING ON THE SICK.
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
SENSEI!
ALL THE LIGHTS ARE OFF.
HE'S NOT ANSWERING.
MAYBE HE'S ALREADY ASLEEP.

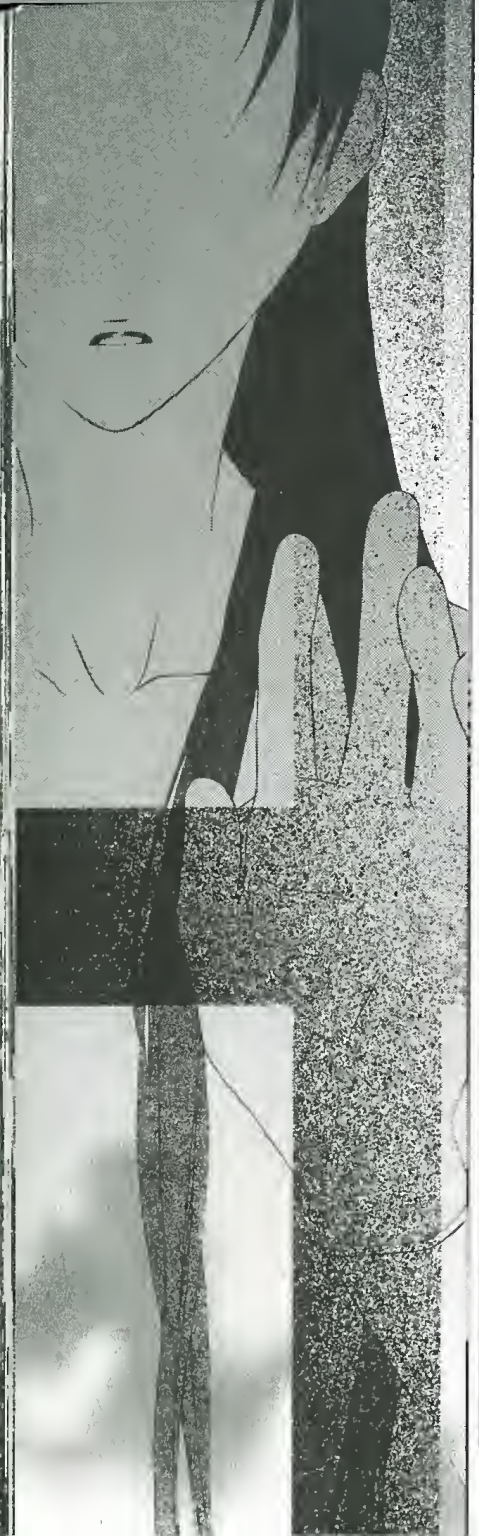
NO!
EVA!!
TELL ME HE'S OKAY!
WAKE UP, DAMMIT!
IT CAN'T BE!
HE WAS FINE THIS MORNING!
EVA...
SENSEI!
HE'S JUST SLEEPING, RIGHT?
WAKE HIM UP, SENSEI!

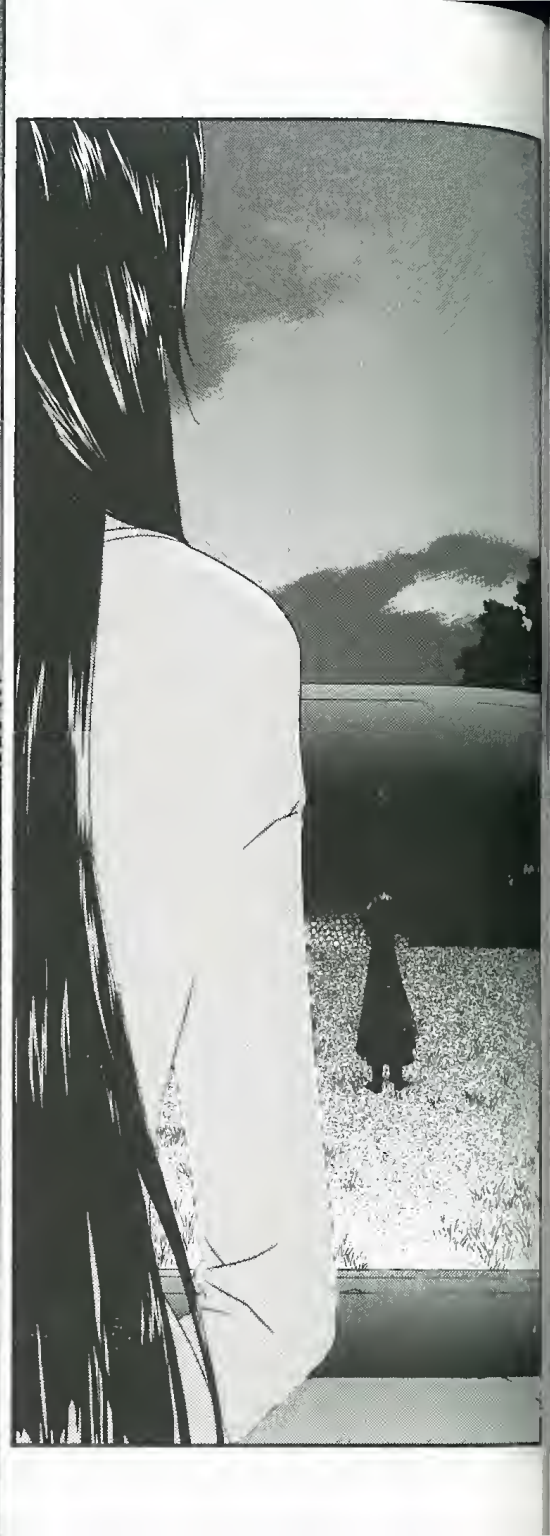
HE'S NOT...
... BREATHING!


I'M SORRY, BUT...
...COULD YOU TELL THE VILLAGERS? I'LL TELL THE MAYOR.
SURE, LEAVE IT TO US. ARE THE OTHER CHILDREN ASLEEP? WE'LL TELL AMARIA, TOO. DON'T WORRY.
THANK YOU.
YES, SOMEWHAT.
SENSEI, THIS MUST BE HARD ON YOU, TOO.
YOU SHOULD TAKE A MOMENT TO GRIEVE, AS WELL.
HAS THE YOUNG LADY...
...FINALLY CALMED DOWN, SENSEI?
I WAS SO CAUGHT UP WITH TAKING CARE OF HER...
...I DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO MOURN.
...AND I HAD TO CALM HER.
...EVA WAS HYSTERICAL...
SENSEI, WHAT DO I DO!?
WAAAAH!
HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN!?

I CAN'T...
...LET MY GUARD DOWN.
I HAVE TO...
...STAY FOCUSED.
AMARIA.
IF THE OTHERS SEE ME LOSE IT...
...THEY'LL PANIC.
I'LL JUST DO WHAT I HAVE TO DO...
...AND GRIEVE LATER.
I HAVE TO STAY COOL.
KEEP IT TOGETHER, KEEP IT TOGETHER, KEEP IT TOGETHER.
HAVE TO STAY CALM.
SENSEI!
SEE, I CAN STILL WALK.
IS IT...
IS IT TRUE?
YES.
HE TOLD ME... ABOUT ATTY.
UM!
I JUST RAN INTO MY FATHER.
WHY...?
I'M SORRY...
HE WAS STILL SO YOUNG.
HOW AWFUL...
.....

NO, SENSEI!
DON'T THINK YOU HAVE TO DO EVERYTHING YOURSELF!
I...!
YOU'RE ALWAYS THINKING OF EVERY-ONE ELSE, SENSEI.
IF YOU'RE HURT-ING NOW, THEN AT LEAST...
...SO STOP PUSHING YOURSELF SO HARD!
LEAVE EVA TO ME, TOO! I CAN HELP...
THAT'S IT! I'LL DO IT!
I'LL HANDLE THE PAPERWORK, AND CHECK ON EVERY-ONE!
SENS...
AND THEN...
WHAT WAS IT AGAIN?
I HAVE TO TELL HIM, AND THEN...
NO...
...PROVE I'M OKA-
SHE'S WORRIED ABOUT ME...
SO I HAVE TO...
I'M ON MY WAY TO THE MAYOR'S HOUSE NOW.
AND...
HUH?
UH...
WHAT'S HAPPENING? I CAN'T THINK...
THIS IS NO TIME TO LOSE MY TRAIN OF THOUGHT.
WHAT IS THIS? WHAT WAS I GOING TO SAY?



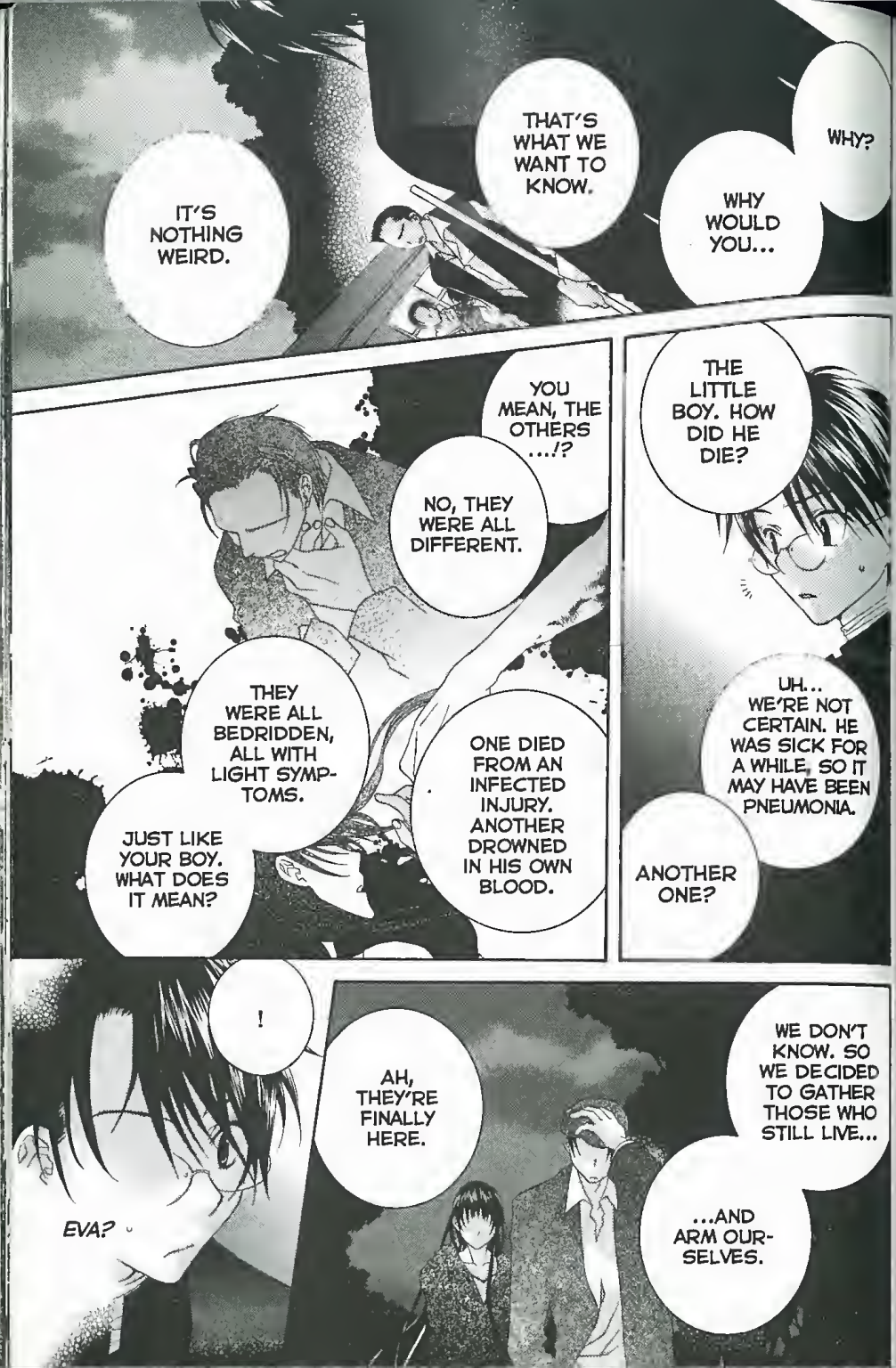


...TELL-

THANK YOU.
.....

.....

I'D FINALLY FOUND MY PLACE.


IT'S NOTHING WEIRD.
THAT'S WHAT WE WANT TO KNOW.
WHY WOULD YOU...
WHY?
YOU MEAN, THE OTHERS ...!?
NO, THEY WERE ALL DIFFERENT.
THEY WERE ALL BEDRIDDEN, ALL WITH LIGHT SYMPTOMS.
JUST LIKE YOUR BOY. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
ONE DIED FROM AN INFECTED INJURY. ANOTHER DROWNED IN HIS OWN BLOOD.
THE LITTLE BOY. HOW DID HE DIE?
UH... WE'RE NOT CERTAIN. HE WAS SICK FOR A WHILE, SO IT MAY HAVE BEEN PNEUMONIA.
ANOTHER ONE?
!
AH, THEY'RE FINALLY HERE.
EVA?
WE DON'T KNOW. SO WE DECIDED TO GATHER THOSE WHO STILL LIVE...
...AND ARM OURSELVES.

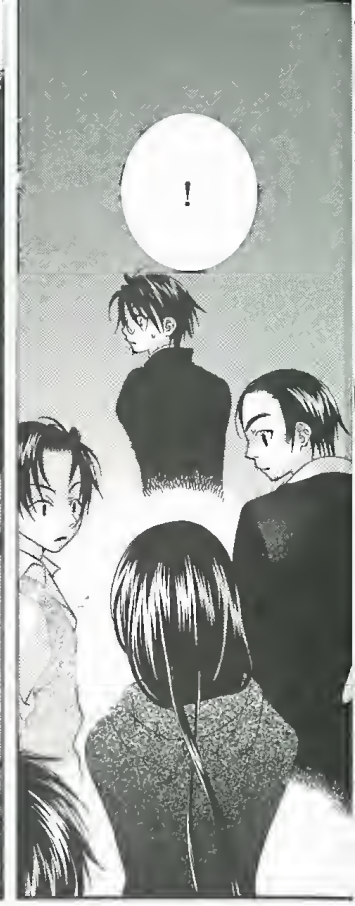
THAT'S WHY...
WE'RE RIGHT, YEAH?
...WE'VE ALL GATHERED AT THE MAYOR'S HOUSE.
HUH...?
.....
WHAT?
I GUESS WE'RE THE ONLY ONES LEFT.
...GATHERED HERE?
...WHY THESE PEOPLE...
IS THAT...
...NO ONE ELSE CAME.
WE'RE DIVIDING UP THE WORK, BUT...

WAIT!
WAIT A SECOND! WHY WAS THIS DECIDED!?
HOW ELSE CAN YOU EXPLAIN WHAT'S HAPPENING?
HOW CAN YOU HONESTLY THINK THIS WILL HELP?
WHAT ELSE COULD IT BE BUT THE WORK OF A DEMON?
!
DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY LIVES OUR VILLAGE HAS LOST, TODAY ALONE?
MANY ARE SICK, BUT NOT WITH THE SAME THING.
...THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS DEMONS—
YES, THERE ARE.
I ADMIT IT'S A LITTLE UNUSUAL, EVEN STRANGE! BUT...
!!
NORMALLY, WE'D SEEK OUT A DEMON SLAYER.
PLEASE, WAIT! WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING TO DO?
WHAT ARE THOSE WEAPONS FOR?
CAN'T YOU TELL, SENSEI?
!?
ARE THE WEAPONS READY?
YES, EVERYTHING'S IN ORDER.
THEN LET'S MOVE OUT.
H-HOLD ON A SECOND!
WHERE'S AMARIA?
HOW MANY ARE LEFT?
NOT MANY. ONLY ABOUT HALF OF US.
HALF? THAT'S IT?
HEY.
WHY IS SHE HERE?
THIS IS A WITCH HUNT.

GASP!
ARE YOU HIDING SOMETHING?
MAYBE YOU'RE EVEN A FRIEND OF HIS! IS THAT IT?
I AM A DEMON SLAYER!
BUT HE IS STILL HUMAN!
THE CHURCH BELIEVES THESE DEMONS TO BE MERE SUPERSTITION!
HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT? HOW WOULD YOU KNOW?
HE'S JUST A STRANGER. WHY DO YOU PROTECT HIM?
IN YOUR VERY CHURCH, SENSEI.
THIS ALL STARTED WITH THAT SICK MAN.
IF HE'S NOT A DEMON, HE MUST BE A WARLOCK OF SOME SORT!
IT'S SAID THAT SOULS ESCAPE THE BODY DURING SLEEP.
THAT'S WHAT SPREADS THESE DISASTERS!
DON'T YOU FIND IT STRANGE THAT HE'S NEVER AWAKENED?
DON'T YOU CARE FOR THE LIVES WE'VE ALREADY LOST!?
DEMON SLAYER?
A TRUE DEMON SLAYER? WHY WOULD HE COME TO OUR VILLAGE?
WHY DIDN'T HE TELL US UNTIL NOW?
BUT...
BUT, IF IT'S TRUE...
SENSEI IS NOT SHIELDING THAT MAN.
I KNEW ALL ALONG.
IT...IS TRUE.
I...
BUT...!
YES!
I, TOO, BELIEVE THERE'S SOMETHING STRANGE.

...
WHAT?
SHE WENT BY HERSELF TO DELIVER A LETTER.
NO ONE FROM THE OUTSIDE COULD HAVE CUT THE BRIDGE, RIGHT?
EVA...
I SAW IT MYSELF.

EVA...
I AM CERTAIN.
PHEW!
IT'S NOT THAT MAN HE'S PROTECTING.


!

IT'S AMARIA.

MAYOR, STOP THEM! LET ME GO! I TOLD YOU, I AM A PROFESSIONAL DEMON SLAYER! DON'T JUST STAND THERE!
SENSEI...
I'M SORRY, BUT...
MAYOR!
WAIT...!
WE'LL TAKE CARE OF IT...
...WITH THE GIRL AS DIFFERENT AS SHE IS, WE HAVE TO MAKE SURE.
...SO I ADVISE YOU STAY HERE.
WAIT!
PLEASE WAIT! SOMEBODY!
ANYBODY!
I KEPT SAYING SHE WAS BAD LUCK! THAT BLONDE HAIR WAS AN ILL OMEN, I KNEW IT WHEN SHE WAS BORN!
HE'D PROTECT HER...
AMARIA?
THE BLONDE?
BUT WHY? SHE'S SUCH A SWEET-HEART...
THAT'S...!
EVA, PLEASE! YOU'RE WRONG!
HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT!?
GRAB
WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU!?
EVA!!
THAT'S RIDICULOUS!
LISTEN TO YOURSELVES! DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE SAYING!?
HOW CAN YOU BELIEVE ALL THIS!?

AMARIA IS YOUR FRIEND!
WHY!?
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS!?
HOW COULD YOU DO THIS!?
YOU'RE WRONG, SENSEI.
WHY!?
WE WERE NEVER FRIENDS.
FRIEND?
FROM A PROSPEROUS FAMILY, WITH KIND PARENTS...
AMARIA SURE IS PRETTY, ISN'T SHE?
SHE HAD EVERYTHING IN THE WORLD.
SO CHEERFUL, AND KIND. EVERYONE LOVES HER.

PLEASE...!
I'LL WATCH HIM.
YOU TWO MAY GO.
!
EVA...!

AFTER ALL, I WOULD HAVE HIDDEN FROM YOU FOREVER.
THEN I REALIZED I DIDN'T CARE.
IT'S NOT THAT I THINK IT'D BE BETTER IF SHE WERE GONE.
YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND, EVEN IF AMARIA WERE GONE-
I'M KIDDING.
EVA...
PLEASE... DON'T DO THIS. YOU WERE ALWAYS SO STRONG AND KIND. WHAT HAPPENED?
I'M JUS KIDDING
YOU'RE SO GOOD, SENSEI.
YOU WOULDN'T EVER BE ABLE TO KILL ME AND CHOOSE AMARIA.
I COULD.
YOU'RE GOOD TO EVERYONE. THEY ALL LIKE YOU.

!
YOU DO...
RIGHT, SENSEI?
SHE ALWAYS HAD EVERYTHING I DIDN'T.
EVEN YOU, SENSEI.
IT'S OKAY. I PRETENDED NOT TO LOVE YOU.
YOU KNEW, DIDN'T YOU?
YOU ALWAYS WERE GOOD AT PLAYING DUMB, SENSEI.
DON'T YOU FIND THAT UNFAIR?

!!
"OUR WEAPONS..."
SWISH
!
YOU'RE SO MEAN, SENSEI.
I'M SO TIRED.
IT'S ALL OVER NOW.
NOTHING...
NOTHING.
I DON'T NEED YOU ANYMORE...
...FAREWELL.

SO PLEASE, SENSEI...
...LOOK AT ME.

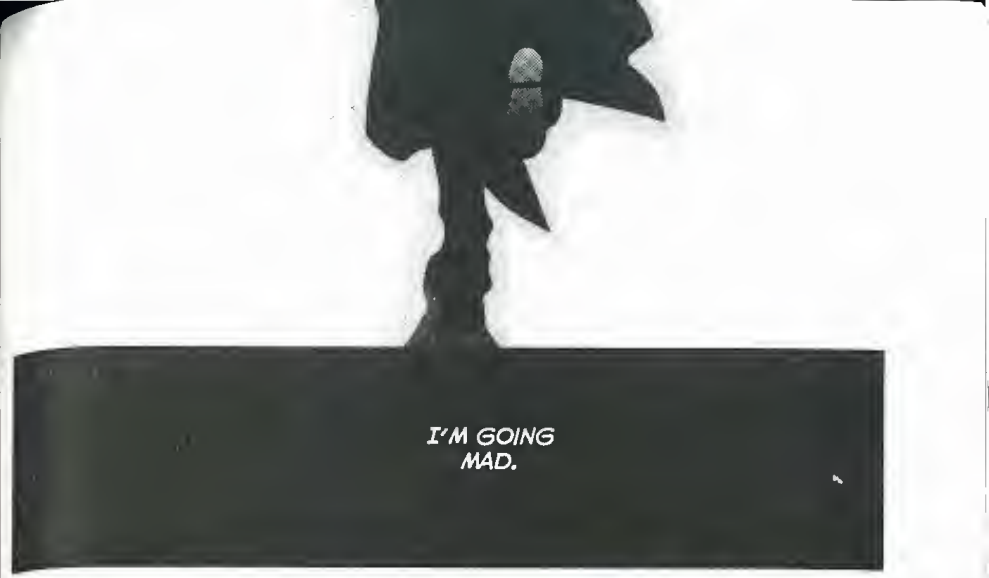
THUD

EVA...
!
SENSEI...
ZWIP
.....!
THE OTHERS...
UNRAVEL
THEY DON'T KNOW SHE'S AT THE CHURCH.
GO, QUICKLY.
.....
BUT...

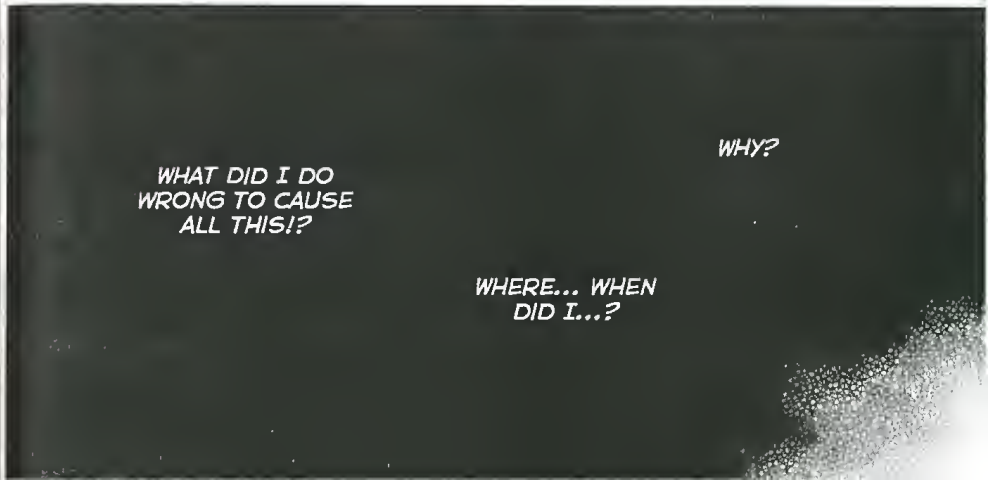
WHY...!?

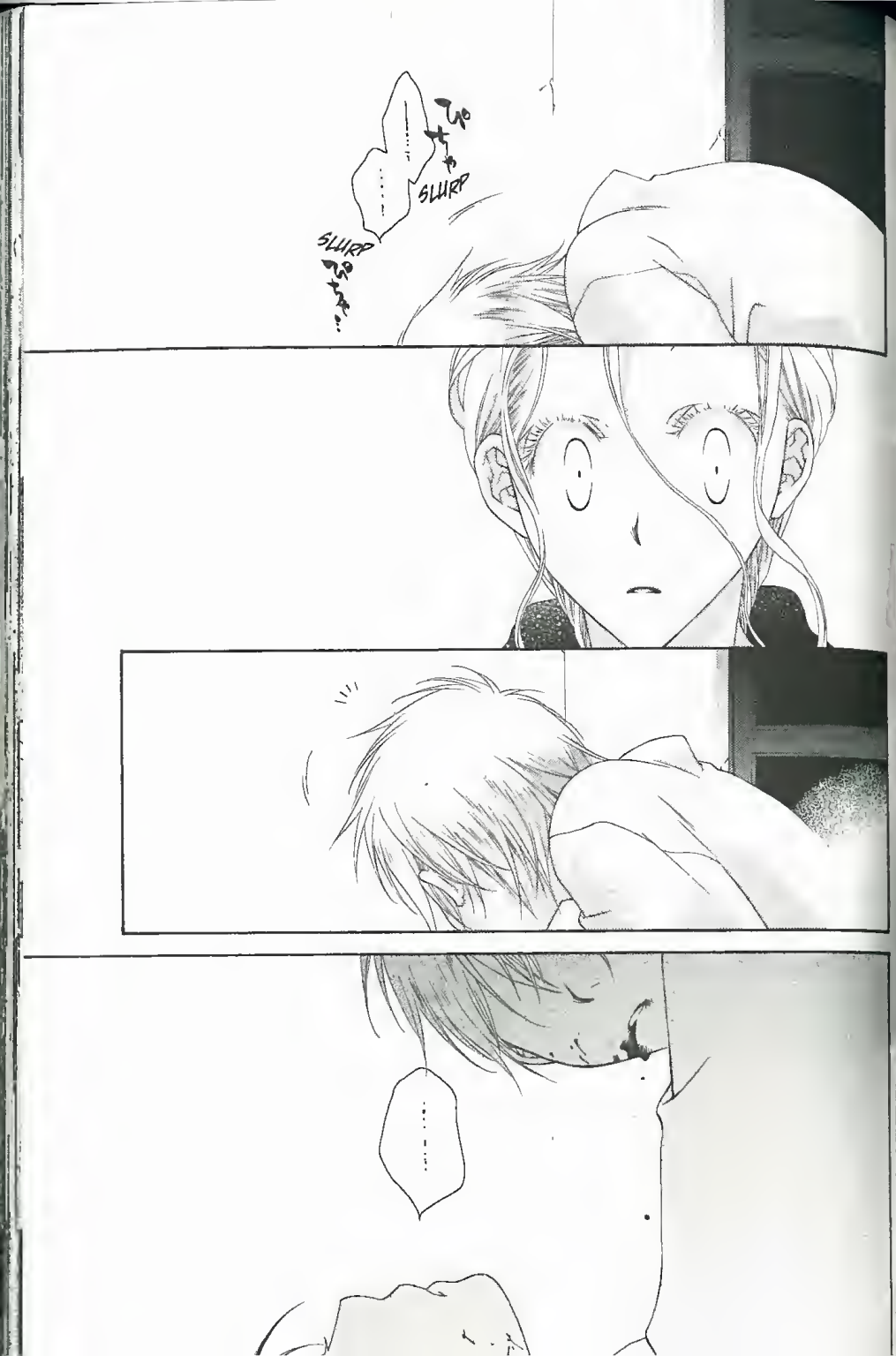
I
EVA SURE IS TAKING HER TIME.
I THOUGHT I HEARD A COMMOTION OUTSIDE.
IT MUST'VE BEEN MY IMAGINA-TION.

AFTER I'D FINALLY FOUND MY PLACE...
WHY!?
AMARIA!!


I'M GOING MAD.

SHE MUST'VE ESCAPED! GO OUT AND FIND HER!
HER PARENTS ARE IN HERE. THEY'RE DYING!
NOTHING HERE!
FIND HER, YET?


WHAT DID I DO WRONG TO CAUSE ALL THIS!?
WHY?
WHERE... WHEN DID I...?

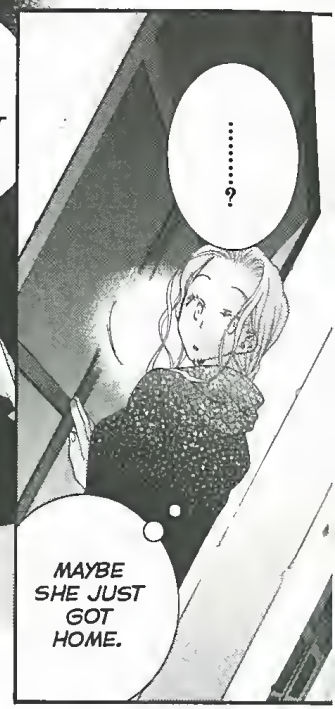

SLURP
SLURP
SLURP

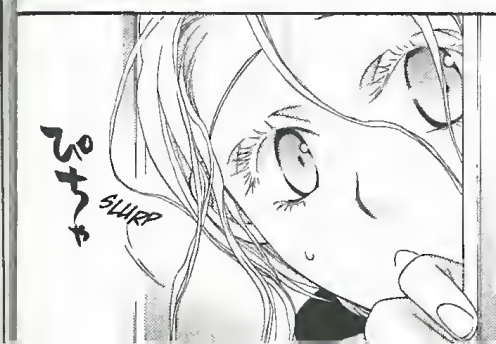
I HAVEN'T SEEN ANYONE.
So strange
CLATTER
!
SHE SAID SHE'D JUST BE A MOMENT, BUT SHE HASN'T COME BACK.

THEY'RE COMING FROM THE CHILDREN'S ROOM.
OH, NO! MAYBE ONE OF THEM'S AWAKE!
OH, HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO TELL THEM ABOUT ATTY?

I HEAR VOICES.
!

BUT THAT WASN'T THE FRONT DOOR.
IT SOUNDED LIKE SOMETHING FELL.


.....?
MAYBE SHE JUST GOT HOME.


SLURP

CLATCH
OKAY, I HAVE TO STAY CALM.
ESPECIALLY AFTER I TOLD SENSEI...

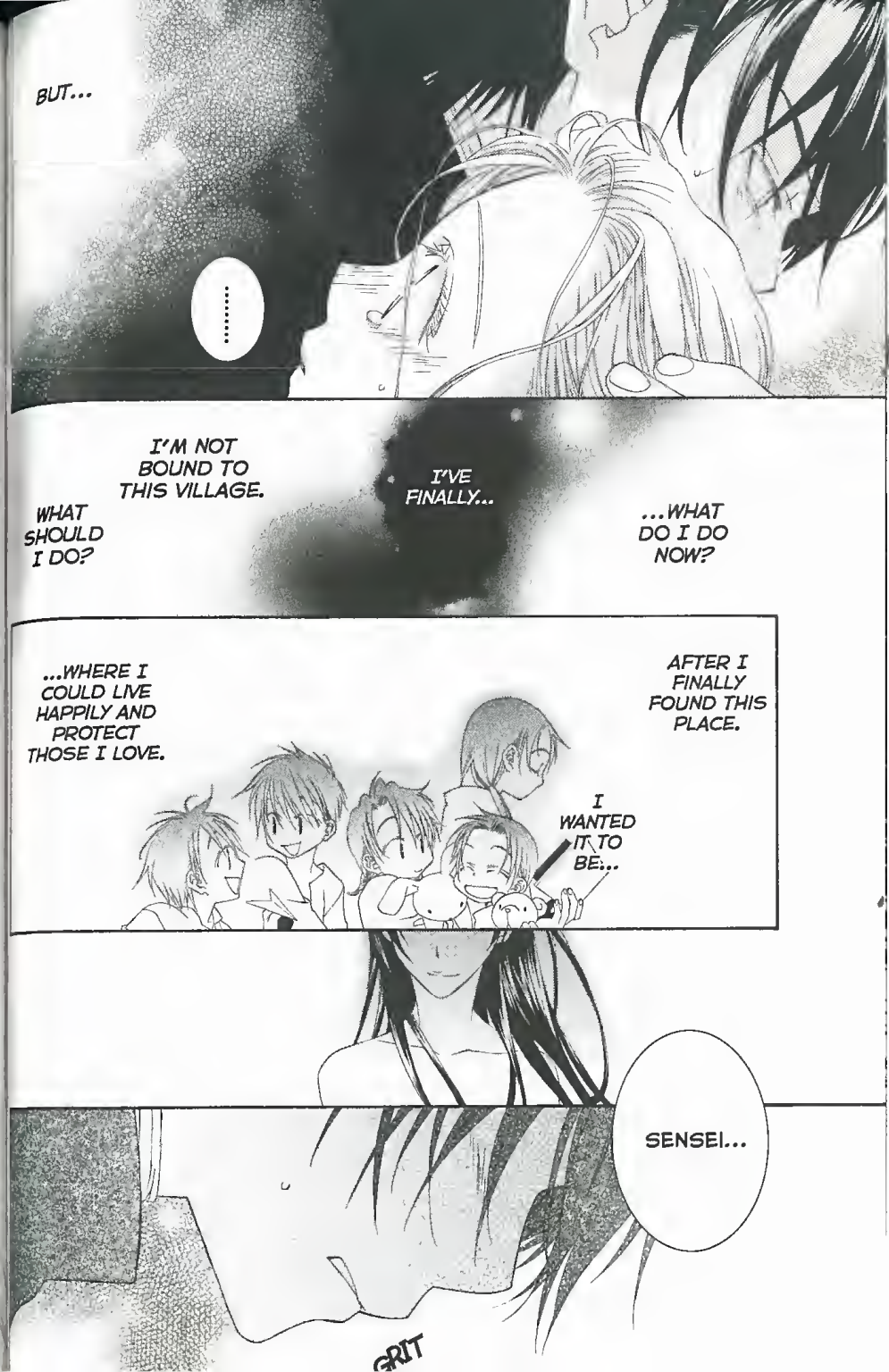
WHAT IS THIS?
...!
...AH!
PLUNK
ATTILA?
WHAT IS...?
DRIP
NOOOO!
...AAH...!

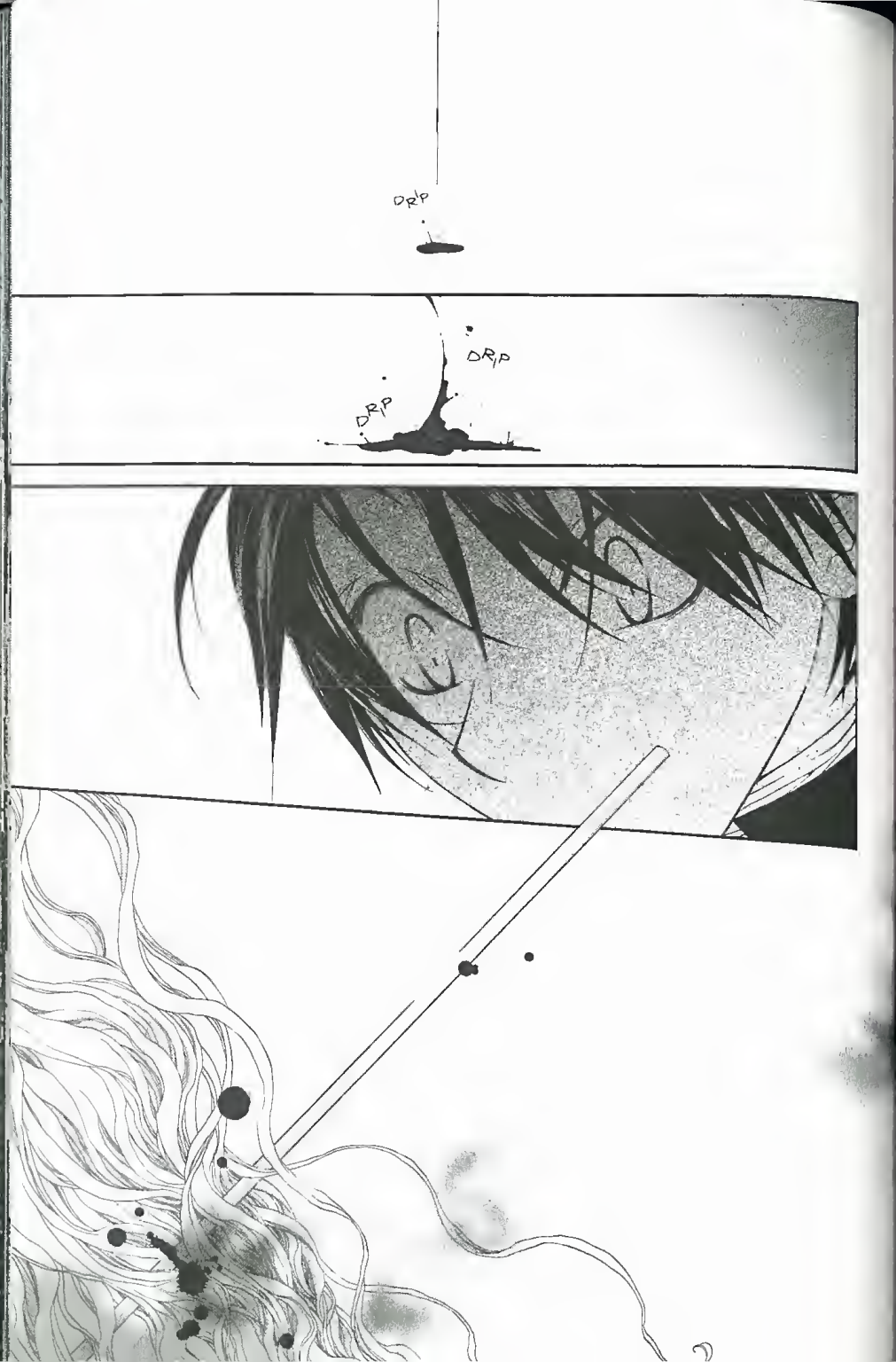
ATTY...?

RUN!
DASH
HUH?
I'M SO OUT OF BREATH...
...I CAN'T EVEN SPEAK.
AND...
AAAAAH!
BAH
CYAAAH!
SE...
I'M OUT OF BREATH.
DAMN IT. I HAD TO RUN ALL THE WAY HERE.
WHEEZE
SENSEI!
ARE YOU... HURT?
N-NO. I'M OKAY.
AMA... RIA.
THAT... WAS THAT ATTILA!?
W-WAIT A MINUTE!
WHAT WAS THAT?
BESIDES...
FORGET IT! JUST RUN!

BUT...
.....
FOR NOW...
IT DOESN'T...
...LOOK LIKE WE'RE BEING FOLLOWED.
I READ ABOUT IT ONCE, BUT...
BUT NOT LIKE-
HUG
!
W-WAIT... SEN... SEI!
I CAN'T... RUN ANY-MORE!
HUFF HUFF!
.....!
COULD YOU REALLY...
...KILL HIM?
COULD YOU REALLY HARM THE BODY THAT USED TO BE THAT LITTLE BOY?
EVERYONE MUST BE WORRIED-
LET'S JUST GO HOME.
COME ON.
... STRANGE.
SENSEI?
WHAT'S THE MATTER? YOU'RE ACTING...
HIS HAIR... AND HIS EYES...
AM I DREAMING? THAT BOY... HE...EVERY-ONE'S-
.....
TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON!

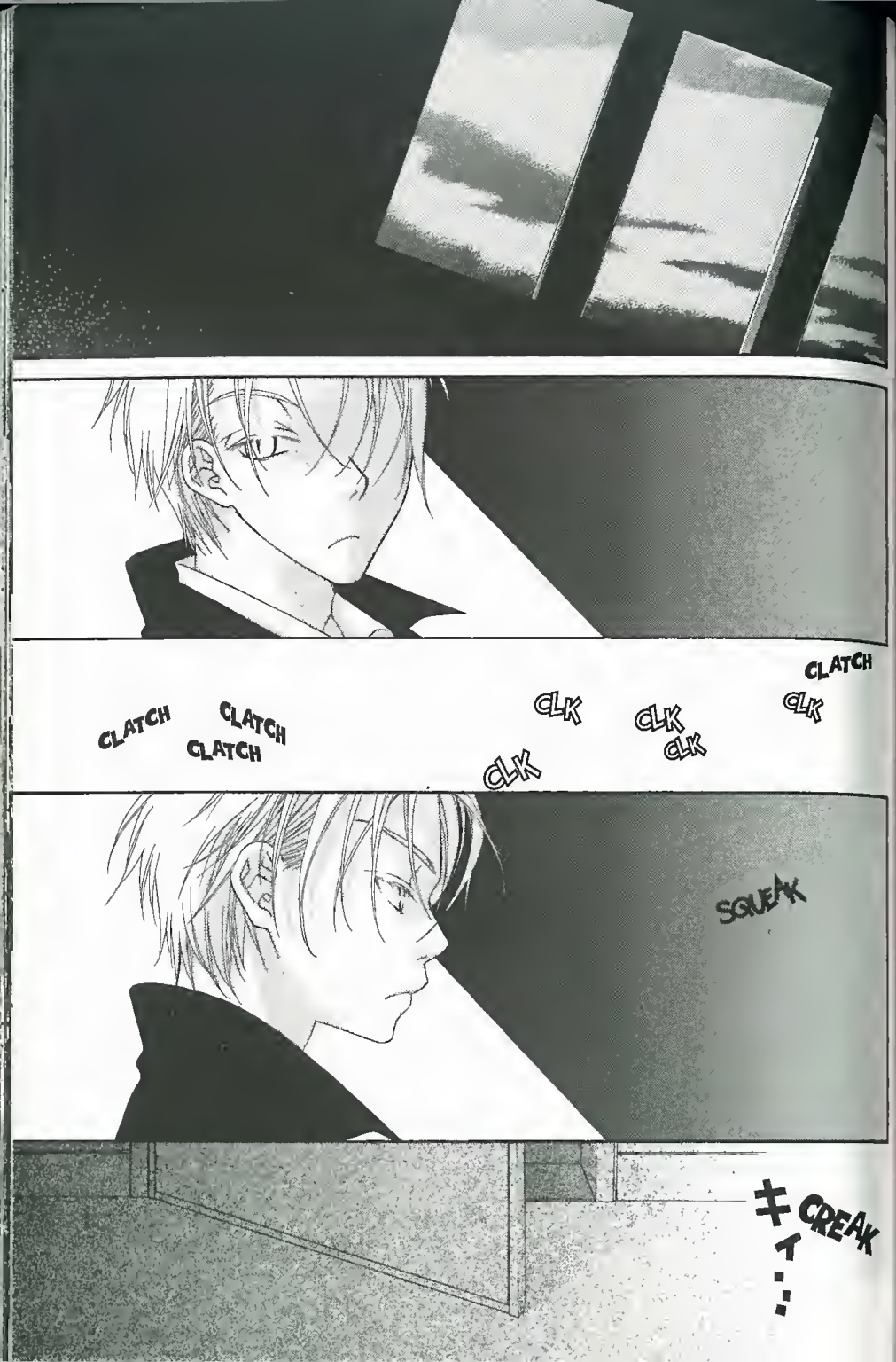
THAT ...!
THAT WAS A SNEAKY THING TO DO!
I'LL PROTECT YOU.
IT'S OKAY.
EVERY-THING'S OKAY. DON'T WORRY.
SEN-
NO FAI-


BUT...
.....
I'M NOT BOUND TO THIS VILLAGE.
I'VE FINALLY...
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
...WHAT DO I DO NOW?
...WHERE I COULD LIVE HAPPILY AND PROTECT THOSE I LOVE.
AFTER I FINALLY FOUND THIS PLACE.
I WANTED IT TO BE...
SENSEI...
GRIT

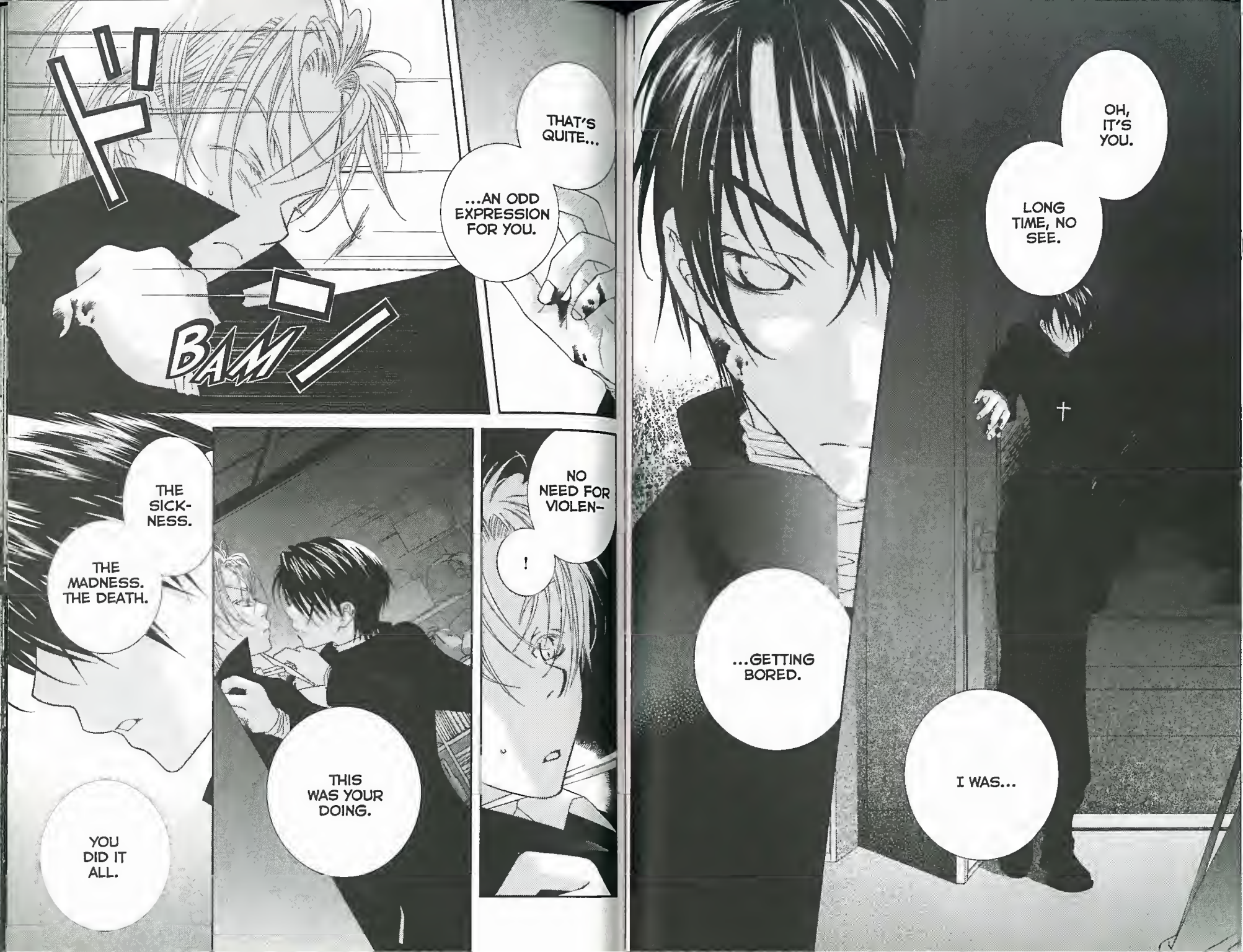

DRIP
DRIP
DRIP

THUD
SEN-

.....
AH...
NO...
THIS CAN'T...
THIS CAN'T BE HAPPEN-ING.
A-
IT CAN'T!
IT CAN'T BE!
A...
...MA
...RI-


CLATCH
CLATCH
CLATCH
CLK
CLK
CLK
CLK
CLATCH
CLK
SQUEAK
キィ…
CREAK

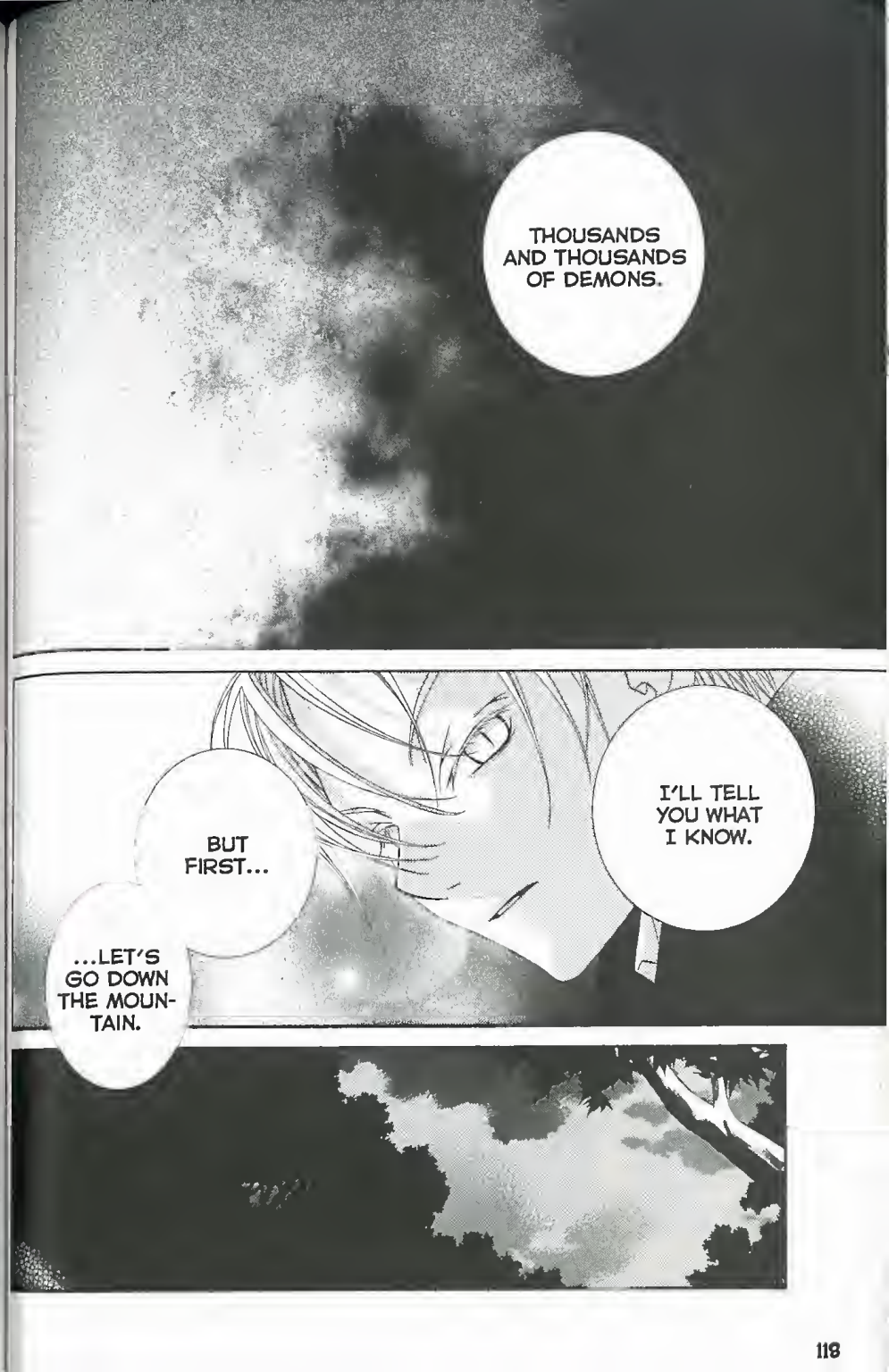
AMARIA!!


OH, IT'S YOU.
LONG TIME, NO SEE.
I WAS...
...GETTING BORED.
THAT'S QUITE...
...AN ODD EXPRESSION FOR YOU.
BAM
NO NEED FOR VIOLEN-
!
THIS WAS YOUR DOING.
THE SICK-NESS.
THE MADNESS. THE DEATH.
YOU DID IT ALL.

YOUR RIGHT EYE.
LET ME SEE IT.
!?
THAT EYE.
THERE'S SOME-THING.
SOMETHING STRANGE...
YOU SAW IT YOURSELF, RIGHT?
SEE?
YOU UNDER-STAND NOW, RIGHT?

ANSWER ME!!
HOW COULD YOU!?
WHY!? WHY DID YOU DO IT!?
.....
IF YOU REALLY THINK IT WAS ME, WHY STOP?
IF YOU HONESTLY BELIEVED THAT...
...YOU'D HAVE KILLED ME OUT-RIGHT.
YOU ALREADY KNOW THE TRUTH.

THE VILLAGE IS FULL...
...OF TINY, TINY...
...DEMONS.
IT WILL MAKE MORE SENSE IF YOU COMPARE THEM TO A DISEASE.
BUT WHAT THEY SPREAD ISN'T SICKNESS. IT'S MALICE AND INSANITY.
THINK OF THEM AS CONTAGIOUS.


THOUSANDS AND THOUSANDS OF DEMONS.
I'LL TELL YOU WHAT I KNOW.
BUT FIRST...
...LET'S GO DOWN THE MOUNTAIN.

GROWING EVER MORE POWERFUL, THE DEMONS CONTROL THE MIASMA. THE EYE IN THE CENTER OF THE STORM.
BY INFECTING A LARGE NUMBER OF NEARBY HUMANS, IT CAN ONLY MAKE ITSELF STRONGER.
THAT ANOMALY SEEMS TO ADOPT A WILL OF ITS OWN.
HOWEVER, IT HAS DIFFICULTY MOVING ABOUT ON ITS OWN.
JUST LIKE THE CHRISTIAN SAYING GOES, "EVIL CANNOT ENTER WHERE IT IS NOT WELCOME."
AND AS A GROUP, IT GOES OUT HUNTING FOR PREY.
IT CALLS TO OTHER DEMONS, ABSORBS THEM. SWALLOWS THEM.
SOMEWHAT IRONIC FOR BEINGS THAT CAN EXIST ANYWHERE.
.....
THEY'VE LEARNED TO CONTROL HUMANS.
AS AN ENTITY WITH ITS OWN WILL, THEY'VE FOUND A WAY TO OVERCOME THEIR LIMITATIONS.
Shall we take a short rest?

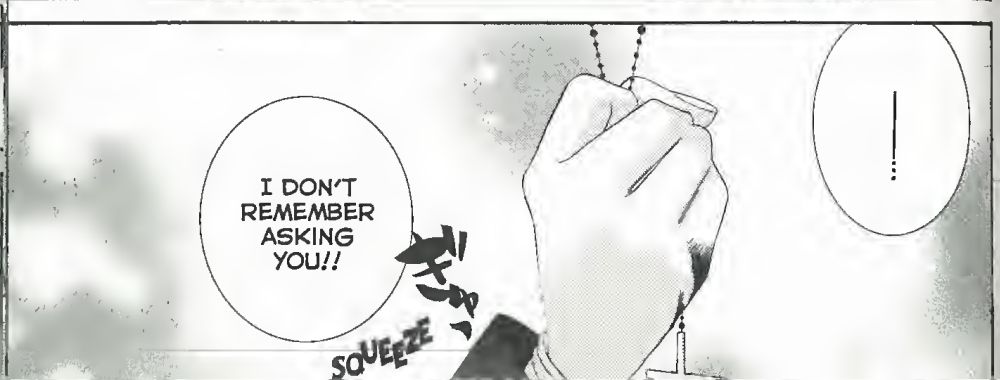
YOU'VE SEEN IT YOURSELF, I'M SURE.
WHEN YOUR BODY IS POSSESSED, YOU EITHER DIE, OR GO MAD.
BREAK DOWN THE SENSES, AND AFFECT THE BODY.
THEY DEVOUR THE HEART.
THEY CAN'T INFECT OTHERS AT THIS STAGE.
THEY CONTROL THE BODY EVEN IN DEATH, AS THE RESURRECTED.
AND IF YOU CANNOT DIE, YOU CAN'T BE BROUGHT BACK AS A ZOMBIE.
YOU'LL NEVER DIE AS LONG AS THEY LIVE WITHIN YOU. YOU WON'T CATCH SICKNESS, OR DISEASE.
THEY CAN EXIST IN ALMOST ANY FORM.
BUT EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE, AN ANOMALY IS BORN.

IT MAY EVEN HAVE INTELLIGENCE ENOUGH TO FEEL THE JOY OF MAKING SUCH A MAN FALL.
IT HAS A SENSE OF HUMOR.
FROM WHAT I'VE SEEN, IT TENDS TO PICK MEN OF THE CLOTH AS ITS HOST.
IF THERE WERE, I'D HAVE TOLD YOU RIGHT AWAY.
IS THERE A WAY...
...TO SAVE THEM?
.....
THEN WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
TO PUT IT BLUNTLY, THERE ARE NO SURVIVORS. THERE NEVER ARE.
.....
THE VILLAGE DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE.

THAT'S WHEN THE CORE OF THE SWARM, THE ORIGINAL GROUP, BREAKS DOWN THE BODY IT WAS USING.
IT SEEKS OUT A NEW HOST, AND SWITCHES BODIES.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
.....
THE MAN WHO WOULD NOT WAKE...HE, TOO, WAS A PRIEST.
SMART, NO? AFTER ALL, HUMANS CAN GO JUST ABOUT ANYWHERE.
THEY FIND A SMALL VILLAGE, TAKE ROOT IN IT, AND DISPERSE.
ONCE THEY'VE DEVOURED EVERYTHING THERE, THEY LEAVE FOR THE NEXT. THE CYCLE REPEATS.
AND BECAUSE THE POSSESSION IS MORE OF A DISEASE, EVEN A DEMON SLAYER HAS TROUBLE SENSING THEM.
WHEEZE
...YOU...
...ARE ITS NEW HOST.

...PLAN ON...
...KILLING THE SURVIVORS, DON'T YOU?
YOU...
THEY'RE DEAD EITHER WAY.
DO YOU REALLY THINK...
...I'LL LET YOU DO THAT?
BECAUSE OF THE MASS INFESTATION, THE PROBABILITY OF MORE RESURRECTED IS QUITE HIGH.
ALL I CAN DO IS STOP ANOTHER ONE OF THESE THINGS FROM BEING BORN.

I'M OFFERING...
...TO TAKE CARE OF IT FOR YOU.
DO YOU PLAN ON STOPPING ME, DEMON SLAYER?


I DON'T REMEMBER ASKING YOU!!
SQUEEZE
!!!

I'M HERE...
...TO CLEAN THINGS UP.

WHY DID YOU EVEN COME HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE?
WHY GO BACK TO THE VILLAGE?
WHY, IF IT'S TOO LATE TO SAVE THEM?

THAT'S WHY I'VE FOLLOWED THEM THIS LONG.
I WASN'T ABLE TO INTERFERE THIS TIME, SO I'LL MOVE ON AS IT DOES.

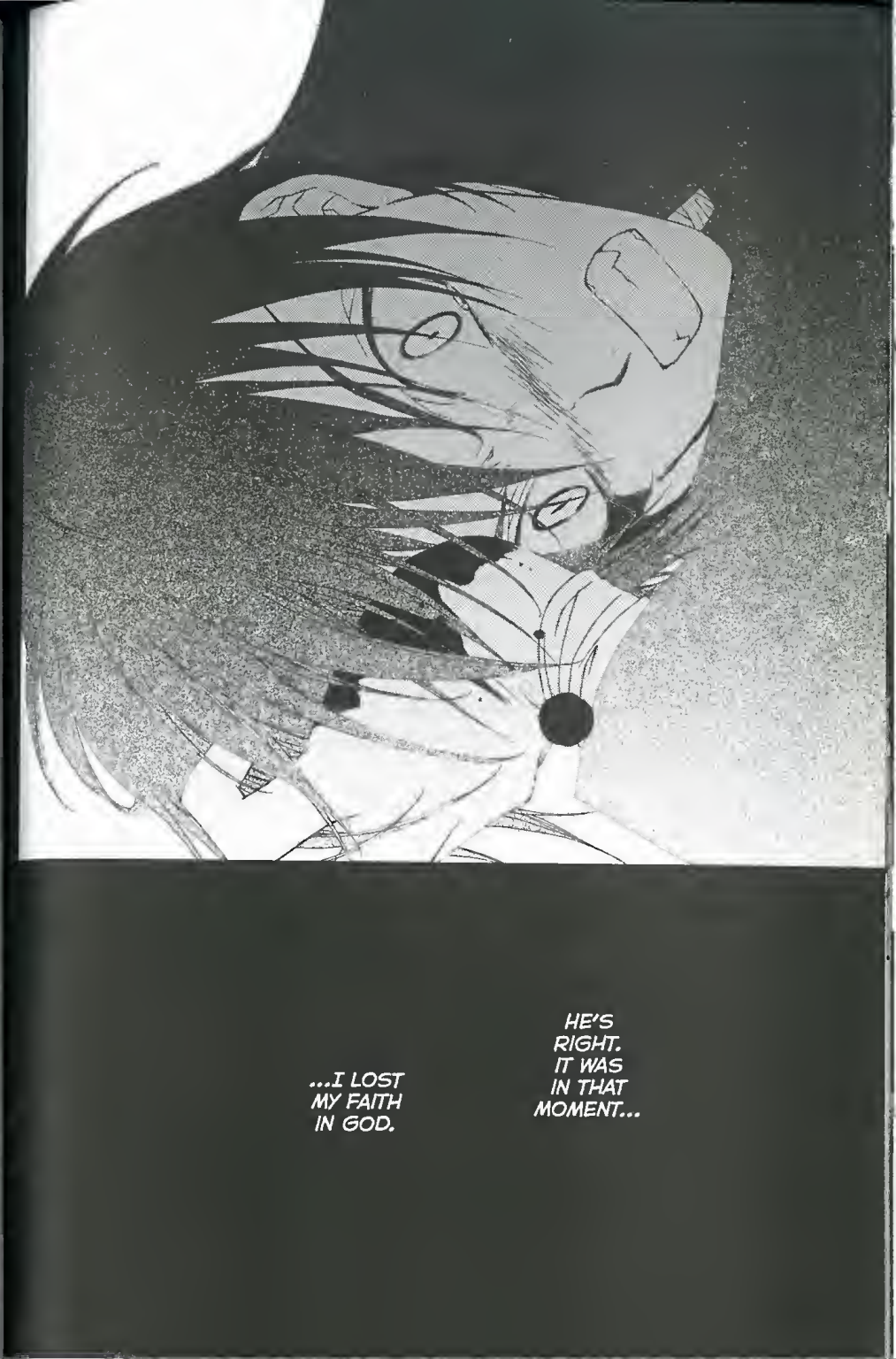
I DON'T CARE IF IT KILLS PEOPLE, BUT...
...I CAN'T JUST WATCH AS IT DEVOURS ALL MY FOOD. I HAVE TO EAT, TOO.

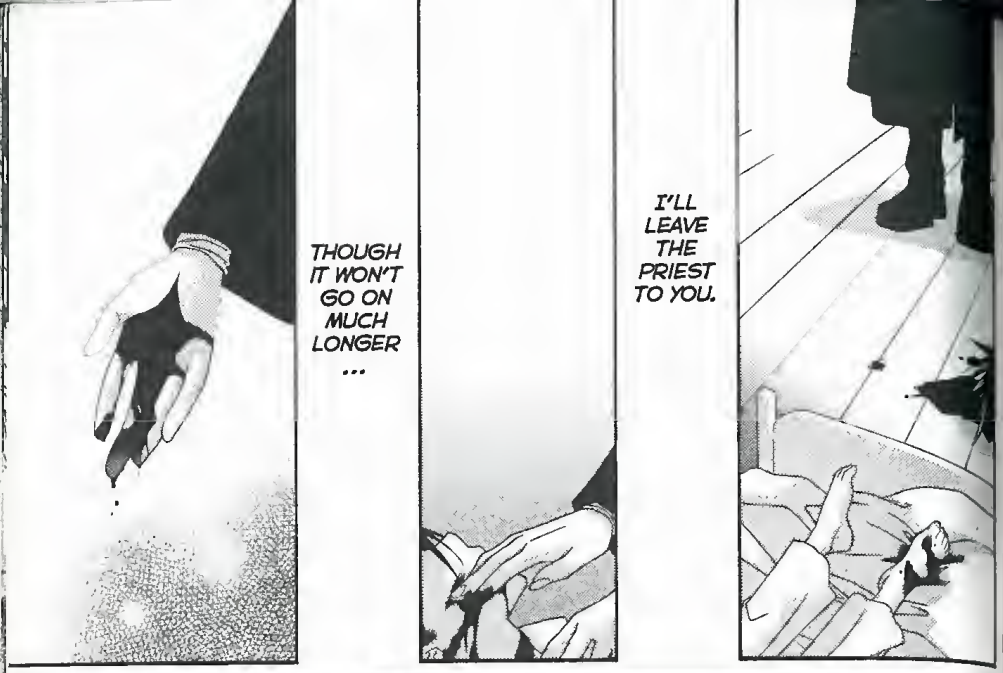
IT'S NOT SO UNCOMMON...
...FOR A MAN SUCH AS YOURSELF TO FEAR DEMONS.
.....
YOU'RE STILL NOT SATISFIED ...
... PRIEST?
PROOF?
BUT DO YOU REALLY THINK GOD WILL LEND POWER TO THE WORDS OF ONE WHO ABANDONED HIS FAITH?
HIS FAITH...

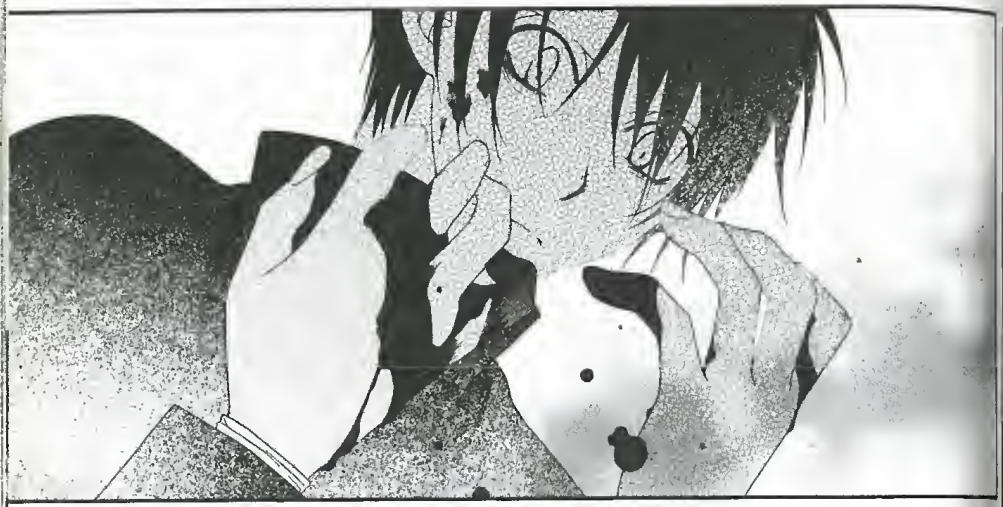
I KNEW I COULDN'T TRUST YOU!
HOW CAN YOU PROVE ANY OF THIS?
AND IF IT IS TRUE, THAT MEANS YOU'RE ONE OF THEM!
GO BACK TO GOD...
...DEMON.
Heaven...
Heaven tells the glory of the lord.
SWEEP
Raise your arms to the skies--

AMARIA!
WE DID IT!
WE'VE KILLED THE WITCH!
NO, NOT YET!
SHE'S NOT DEAD YET! GIVE THE FINAL BLOW, HURRY!
STAB–
STAB

WHAT...
...ARE YOU PLANNING TO DO?
WE'RE ENDING THIS.
ALL THAT'S LEFT...
...IS THE CLEAN-UP.

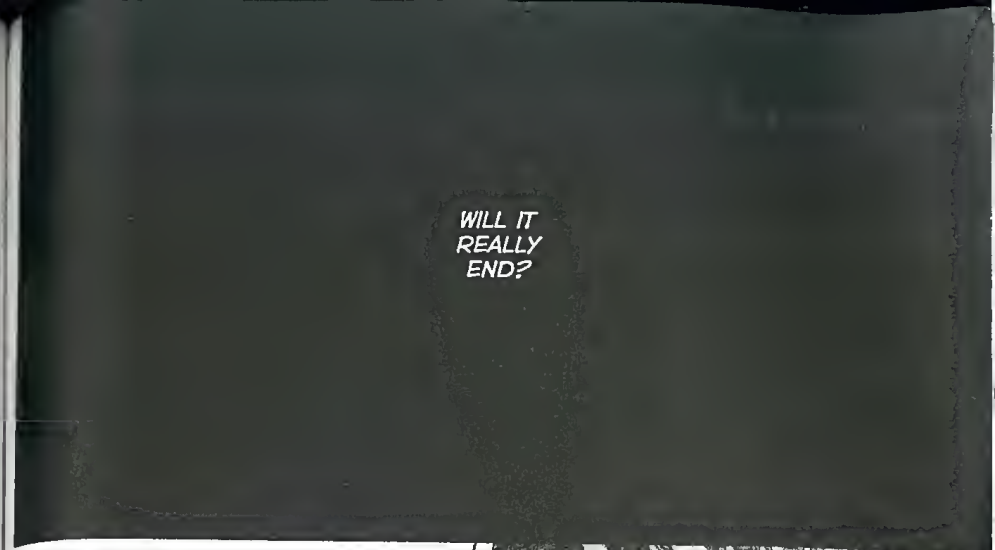

...I LOST MY FAITH IN GOD.
HE'S RIGHT. IT WAS IN THAT MOMENT...

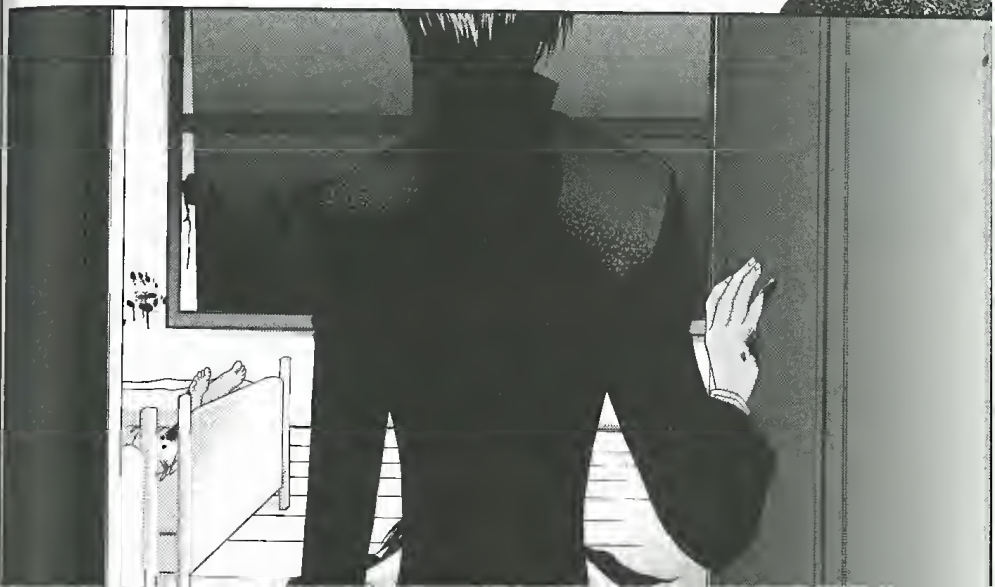


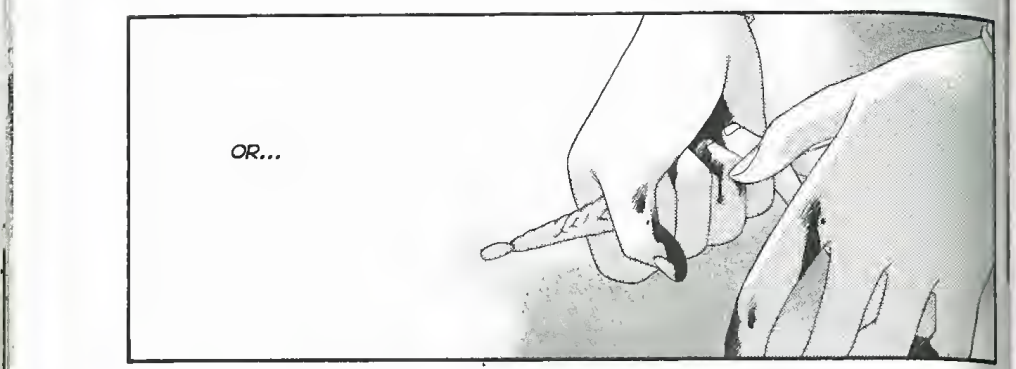


OR...

...END HIS LINGERING DEATH.

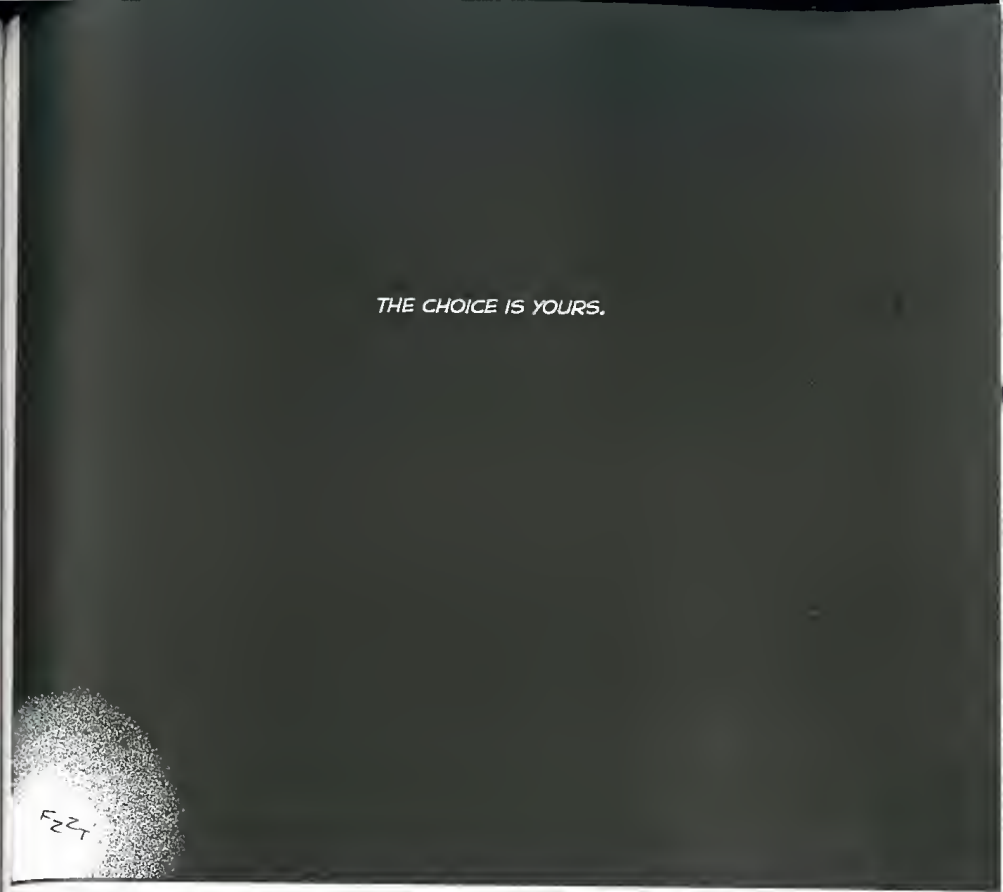


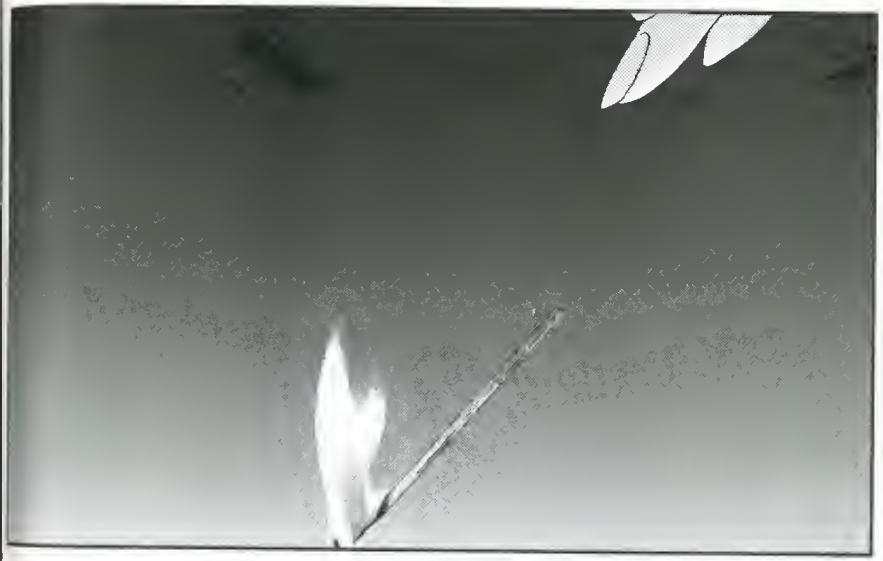




...DEVOTE YOURSELF TO HATRED, AND SEEK REVENGE.

CRACKLE
CRACKLE

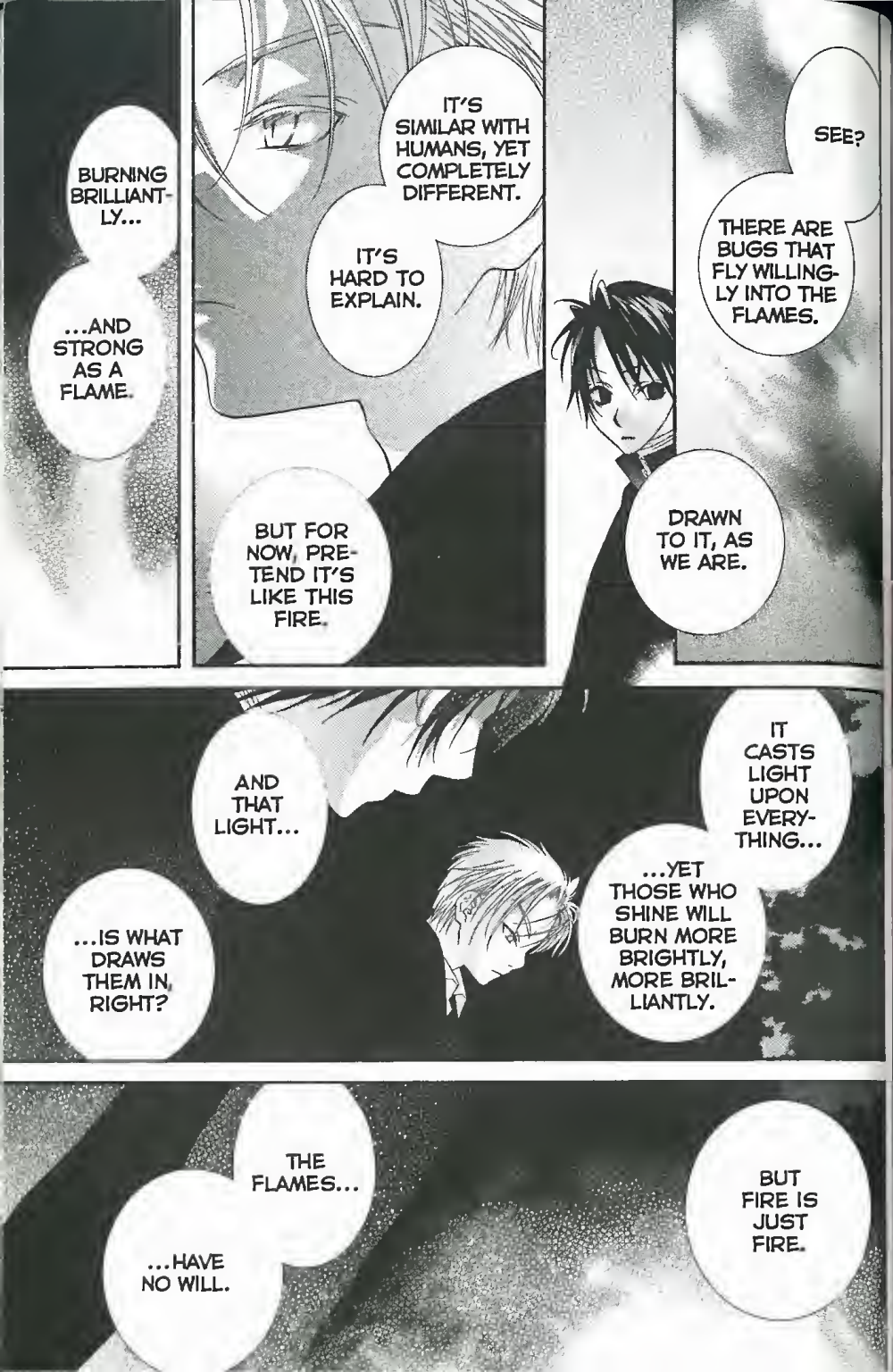

THE CHOICE IS YOURS.
FZZT

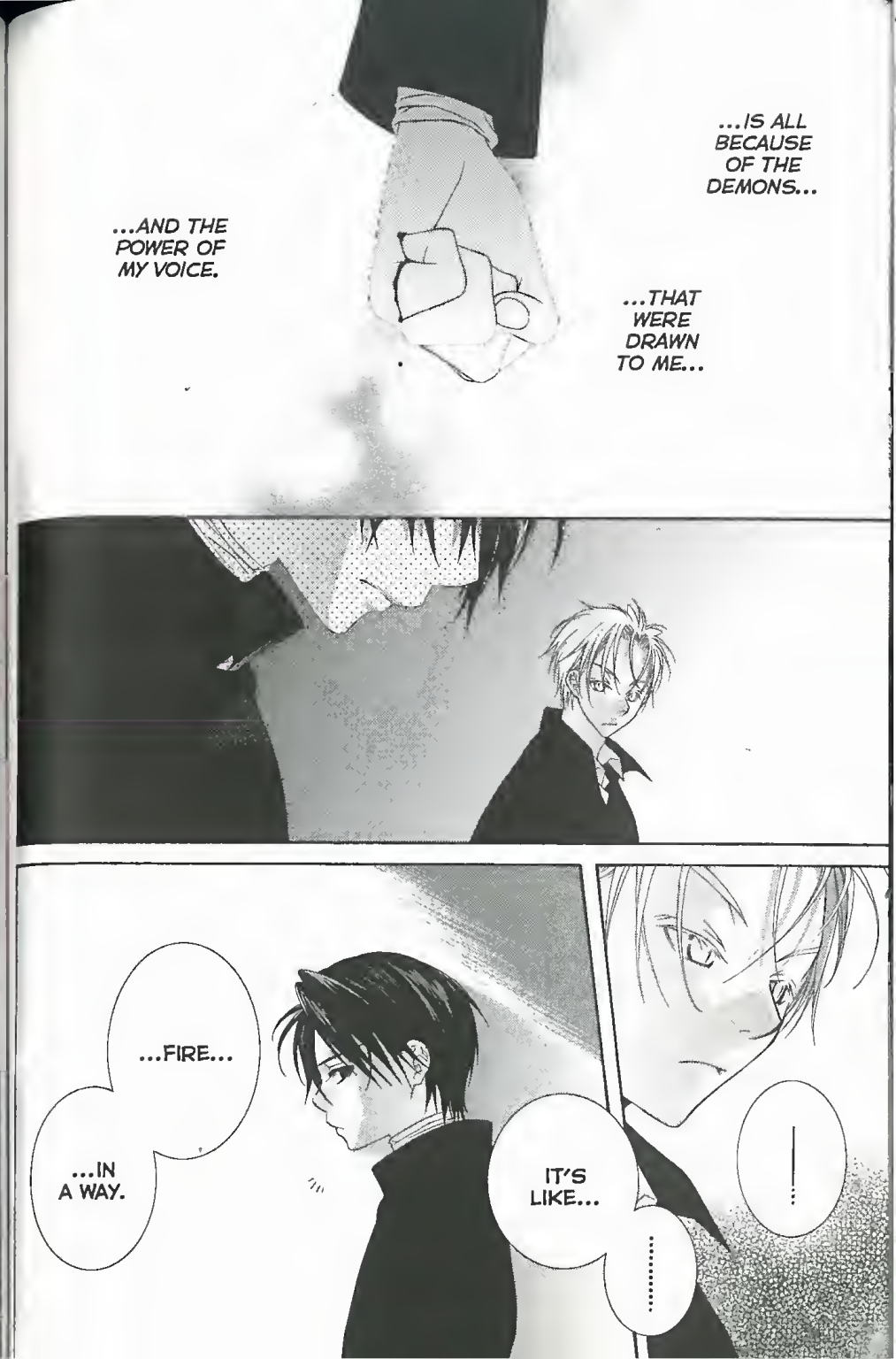


I WAS DISPOSING OF THE CORPSES.
MOST OF THEM HAVE EATEN EACH OTHER, SO THAT SAVED ME SOME TIME.
IF YOU CLEANSE THEM WITH FIRE, THEY CANNOT BE RESURRECT-ED.
.....
THEN, DOES THIS MEAN...
.....
NO.
IT'S NOT OVER YET.
NOT YET.
THUD
SNAP
CRACKLE
.....
YOU'RE LATE.
SNAP
CRACKLE
CRACKLE

THAT'S NOT ALL.
IF I'M THE NEXT VESSEL...
...THAT MEANS WHAT HAPPENED HERE...

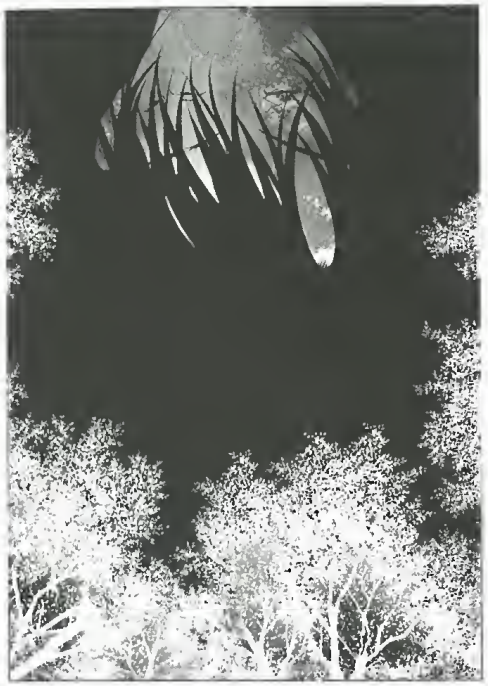
THIS WAS...
...MY FAULT, WASN'T IT?
I NEVER AGREED...
...TO HIDE THE POWER OF MY VOICE.
EVEN IF IT WOULD END IN TRAGEDY.
"YOUR CHARM...
...ISN'T SO NICE."
...IT'S EASY TO BRING ABOUT DISASTER WHEN YOU'RE GIFTED WITH SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY.
MY FATHER AND THE PASTOR ALWAYS SAID...
POWER THAT'S TOO STRONG IS DANGEROUS. AND SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO BE DEALT WITH TO CONTROL IT.
I CONVINCED MYSELF I COULD USE THAT POWER...
...AND THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED.

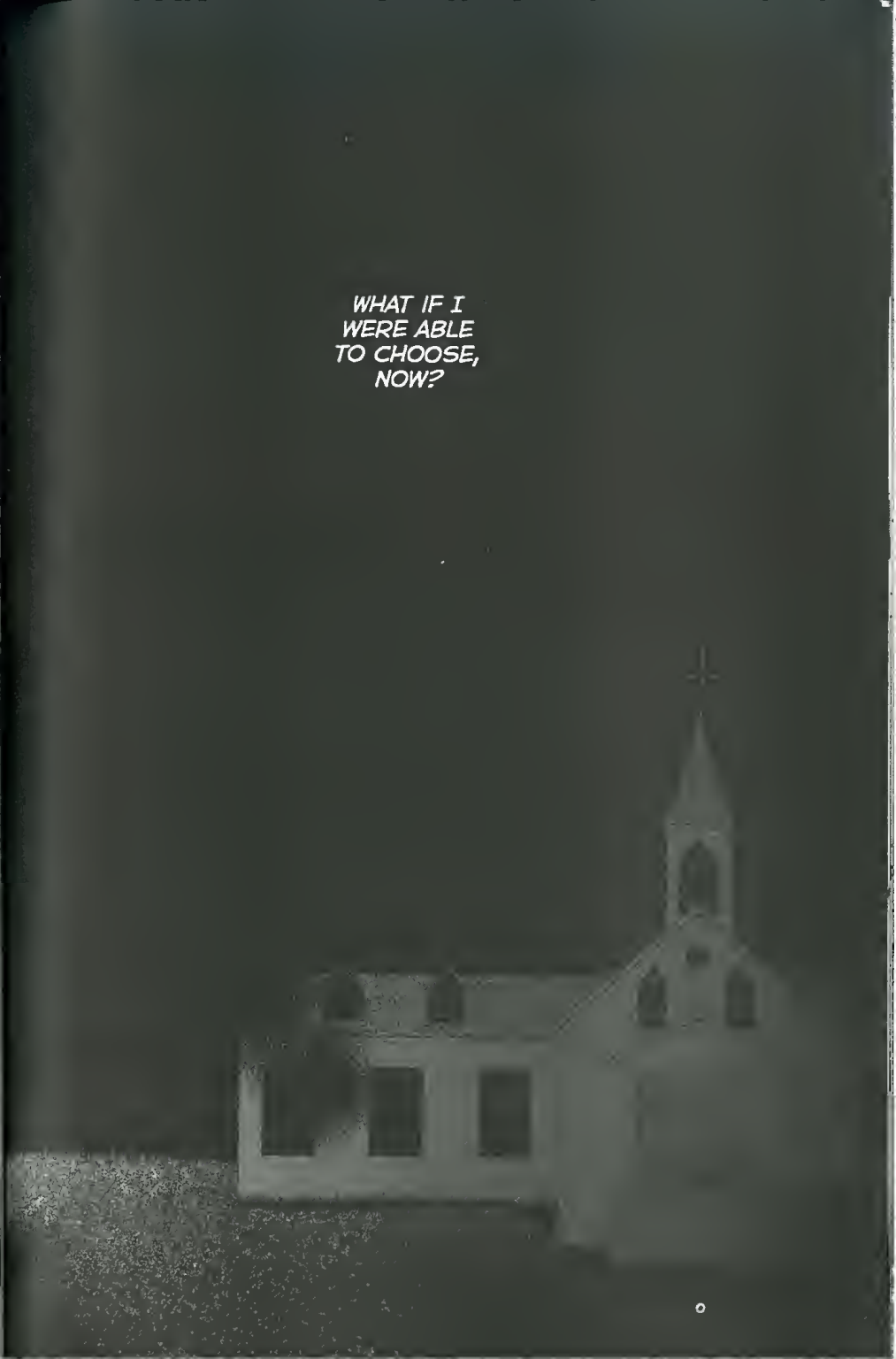

BURNING BRILLIANTLY...
...AND STRONG AS A FLAME.
IT'S SIMILAR WITH HUMANS, YET COMPLETELY DIFFERENT.
IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN.
BUT FOR NOW, PRETEND IT'S LIKE THIS FIRE.
SEE?
THERE ARE BUGS THAT FLY WILLINGLY INTO THE FLAMES.
DRAWN TO IT, AS WE ARE.
AND THAT LIGHT...
...IS WHAT DRAWS THEM IN, RIGHT?
IT CASTS LIGHT UPON EVERYTHING...
...YET THOSE WHO SHINE WILL BURN MORE BRIGHTLY, MORE BRILLIANTLY.
THE FLAMES...
...HAVE NO WILL.
BUT FIRE IS JUST FIRE.


...AND THE POWER OF MY VOICE.
...IS ALL BECAUSE OF THE DEMONS...
...THAT WERE DRAWN TO ME...
...FIRE...
...IN A WAY.
IT'S LIKE...
!
.....

THANK YOU...
...FOR TAKING CARE OF ME.

IS IT THE FIRE'S FAULT IT BURNS THEIR WINGS?




WHAT IF I WERE ABLE TO CHOOSE, NOW?

JUMP
WOUND?
HOW DO I... FEEL?
.....
YOU MUST BE TIRED.
YOUR WOUND'S HEALED OVER COMPLETELY.
WOUND?
ARE YOU UP YET?
HOW DO YOU FEEL?
YOU'VE BEEN ASLEEP FOR THREE DAYS.
!!!!!
HOW?
THIS WARMTH... MY BREATH. AM I ALIVE...?
BUT I COULD'VE SWORN I'D...
LET ME JUST SAY I HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS.
ALL I DID WAS CARRY YOU HERE.

WHAT'S THIS FOR?
A MIRROR?
.....
THERE IS THE POSSIBILITY THAT...
...THE DEMONS CAN ONLY CONSUME A LIVING BODY.
...HERE.
...WHAT?

I REMEMBER...
WHY...?
WHY!?
...I SLIT IT OPEN.
.....
MY NECK...
I MEAN, WHY DO I LIVE? I...
NOT THAT!
WHY!?
WOULD YOU HAVE PREFERRED TO LIE OUTSIDE FOR THREE DAYS?
To go where it wants.
I TOLD YOU BEFORE. IT NEEDS TO INHABIT ANOTHER LIVING THING IN ORDER TO MOVE FREELY.
BUT THE SWARM MAKES SURE TO FIND A NEW BODY BEFORE THE CURRENT ONE DIES.
EVEN IF ITS HOST BECOMES A ZOMBIE, IT REMAINS UNTIL THE BODY WITHERS AWAY.
...INFECTS A HUMAN, IT DEVOURS EVERYTHING WITHIN IT, NEVER LEAVING UNTIL ITS HOST DIES.
.....
CLATTER
WHEN THE DEMON SWARM...

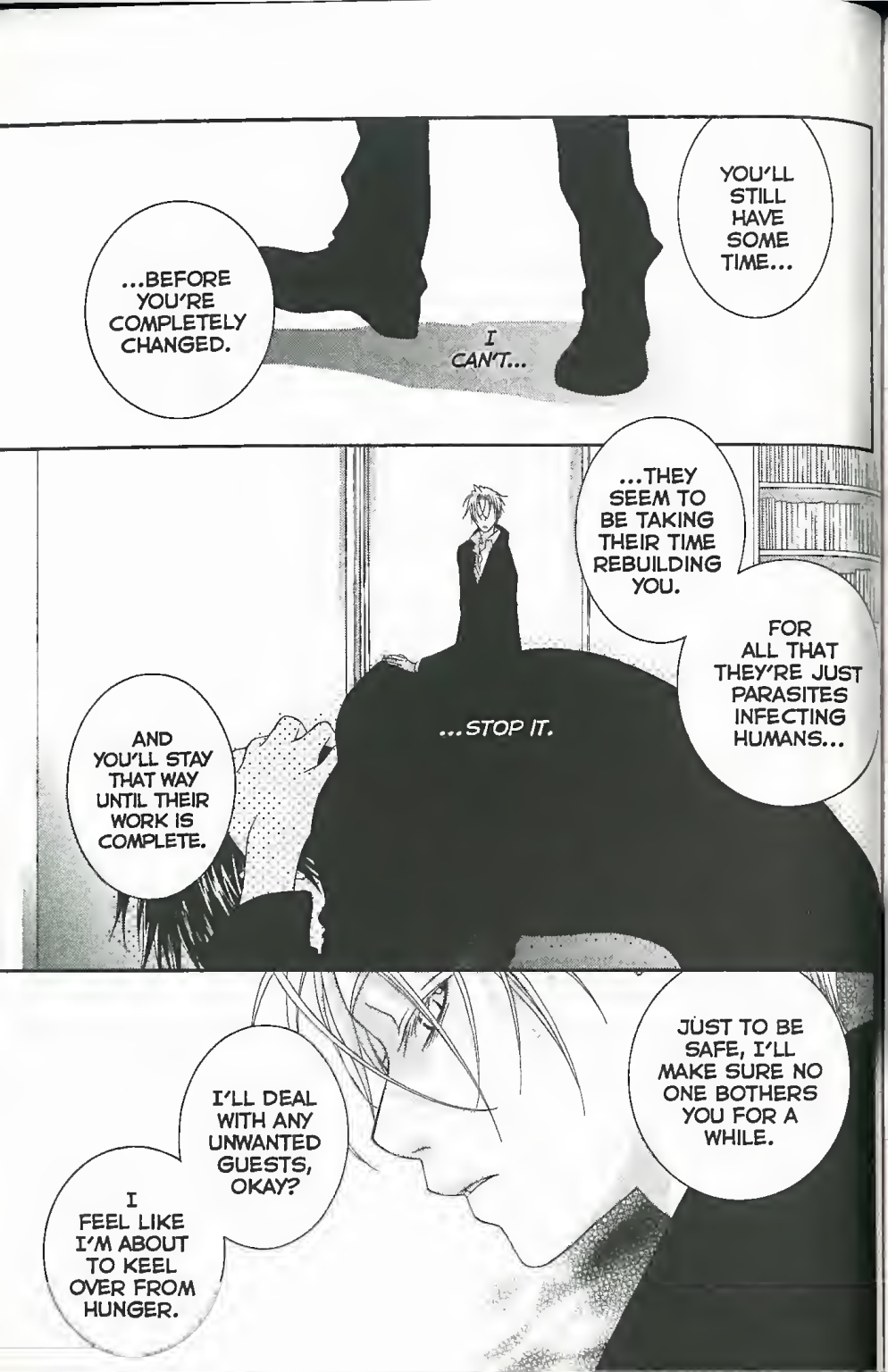
...MEANS WE CAN'T QUITE SAY YOU'RE ALIVE, EITHER.
BUT THE CHANGE IN YOUR RIGHT EYE, AND THE WAY YOUR WOUNDS HEALED...
YOUR BODY'S NOT DEAD.
SORRY ABOUT THIS, BUT I HAD TO MAKE SURE.
IT WAS SUPPOSED TO END WHEN THE ORIGINAL SWARM WAS BURNED.
SEEMS IT WAS ALL FOR NOTHING.

.....
THAT MEANS...
...FROM WHERE I STAND...
...EVEN I CAN'T PREDICT WHAT WILL HAPPEN.
YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE I KNOW WHO'S EVER TRIED TO COMMIT SUICIDE.

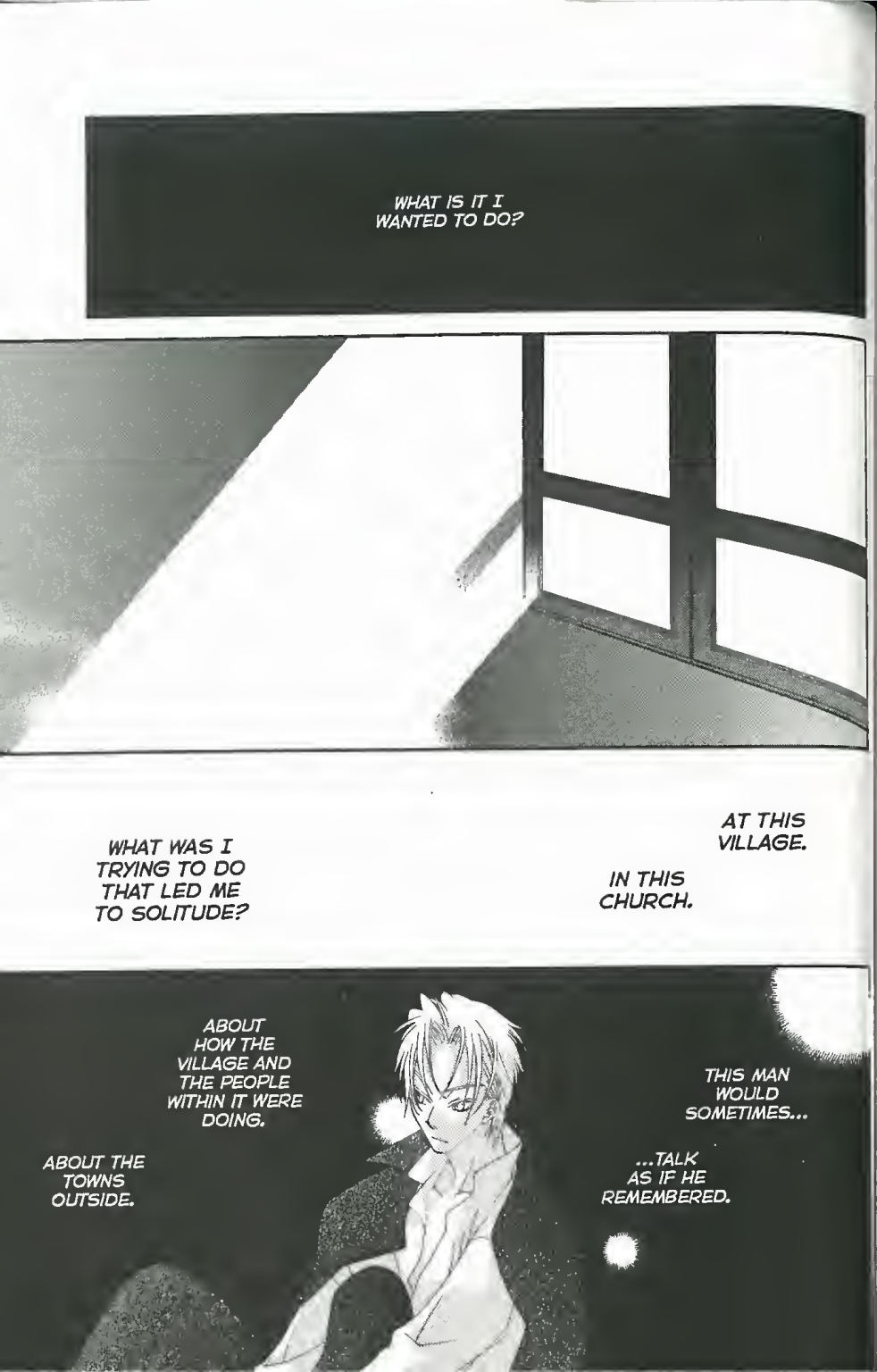
GOOD QUESTION.
I DON'T EXPECT YOU TO UNDERSTAND.
THE DEMON SWARM'S ONLY GOAL IS TO FEED.
WHY?
HM?
WHY DID THIS HAPPEN?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
AS THE CENTER OF THE MIASMA, THE DEMONS CAN DO ANYTHING.
THAT'S WHY THEY MOVE TO POPULATED PLACES. THEY NEED TO INFECT PEOPLE IN ORDER TO FEED.
AND IT'S MORE TO THEIR ADVANTAGE WHEN THEY CAN CONTROL SOMEONE.
...IT WOULD DO ANYTHING TO PROTECT ITS HOST, RIGHT?
IF THE SWARM CAN ONLY EXIST BY FEEDING ON A LIVING BODY...
WHEN YOU TRIED TO COMMIT SUICIDE...
NOW...
... DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
WHETHER CUT BY BLADE, OR BURNED BY FIRE, YOUR WOUNDS HEALED.
YOUR HEART, YOUR BRAIN...WELL, I WON'T GO INTO DETAILS.
IT'S KIND OF ODD, BUT...
...THE MORE SEVERE THE WOUND, THE FASTER IT HEALED.
GREAT, NOW THE SHEETS ARE ALL BLOODY.
Do I have to clean those?
JUST STOP. YOU'RE NOT ACCOMPLISHING ANYTHING.
THAT RIGHT EYE OF YOURS IS NOTHING MORE THAN A MARK. THE DEMONS AREN'T THERE.
WHY ...?

FWAP
NOW YOU'RE SAYING IT'S CHANGING ME!?
YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS!
DON'T MESS WITH ME!
HOW COULD...
...HOW COULD A DEMON SWARM...
...JUST TAKE OVER MY BODY?
I USED TO BE HUMAN, TOO.
I'M HUMAN!
A LONG TIME AGO.
WHAT'S THE DIFFER-ENCE?
I'M NOT LIKE YOU AND THE OTHERS!
I'M JUST A...

...YOU COULD NEVER BE HURT AGAIN?
...DON'T YOU THINK...
...THAT IT WOULD TRY TO ENSURE ...
.....
IT'S ENCASING YOU IN A SHELL.
LIKE HOW THE RIBS PROTECT THE HEART.
ALL THE VITAL PARTS, ALL THE IMPORTANT PARTS...
...IT'S PROTECTING ITSELF BY HIDING WITHIN YOU.
IT'S MAKING SURE THEY'RE ALWAYS SAFE.
YOU...
AND THERE-FORE...


...BEFORE YOU'RE COMPLETELY CHANGED.
I CAN'T...
YOU'LL STILL HAVE SOME TIME...
...THEY SEEM TO BE TAKING THEIR TIME REBUILDING YOU.
FOR ALL THAT THEY'RE JUST PARASITES INFECTING HUMANS...
...STOP IT.
AND YOU'LL STAY THAT WAY UNTIL THEIR WORK IS COMPLETE.
I FEEL LIKE I'M ABOUT TO KEEL OVER FROM HUNGER.
I'LL DEAL WITH ANY UNWANTED GUESTS, OKAY?
JUST TO BE SAFE, I'LL MAKE SURE NO ONE BOTHERS YOU FOR A WHILE.

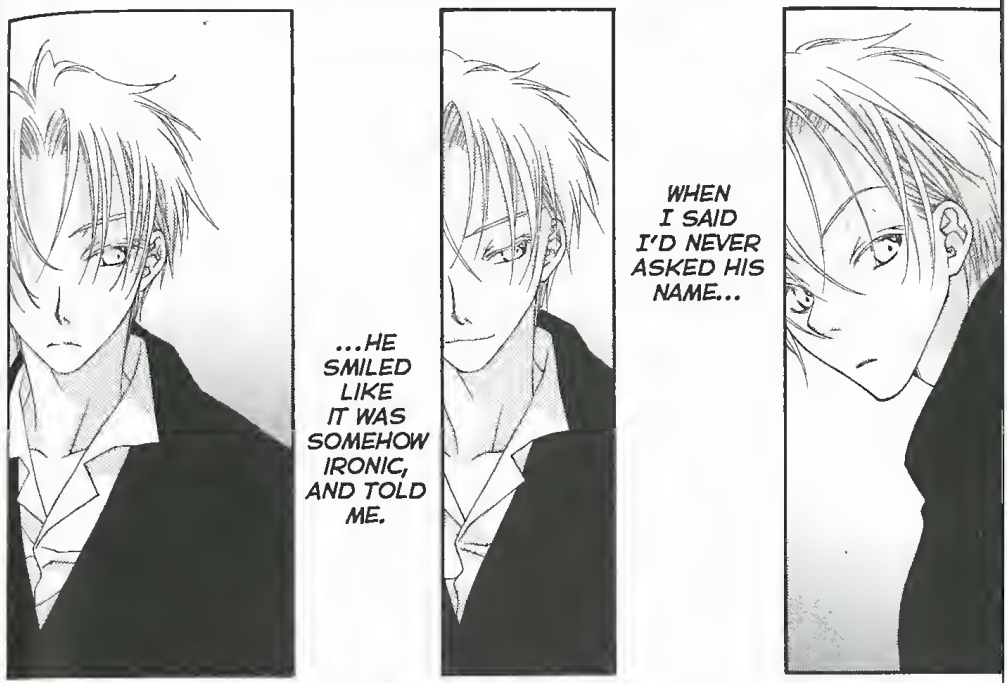
THEN, IN OTHER WORDS...
I WASN'T ALWAYS LIKE THIS.
SO HOW ARE WE DIFFER-ENT, YOU AND I?
NO!
ENOUGH.
I DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT ANYMORE.
IT'S TOO MUCH.
I'M GOING TO BE CHANGED.
I KNOW ALREADY. PLEASE...
IN OTHER WORDS, I'M...
...GOING TO BECOME A DEMON.
...JUST STOP.
THAT'S IT...


WHAT IS IT I WANTED TO DO?
WHAT WAS I TRYING TO DO THAT LED ME TO SOLITUDE?
IN THIS CHURCH.
AT THIS VILLAGE.
ABOUT THE TOWNS OUTSIDE.
ABOUT HOW THE VILLAGE AND THE PEOPLE WITHIN IT WERE DOING.
...TALK AS IF HE REMEMBERED.
THIS MAN WOULD SOMETIMES...

I'LL TEACH YOU.
THERE'S A RULE AMONG US. WE NEVER TURN ON EACH OTHER.
THERE IS SOMETHING, HOWEVER, THAT YOU CAN DO IN THE MEAN-TIME.
SOME-DAY.
...WOULDN'T COME OUT.
THE TEARS...

WHERE DID YOU PUT HER?
THERE WAS A BLONDE GIRL, RIGHT?
THAT DAY, I COUNTED ALL THE BODIES.
BUT THERE WAS ONE MISSING.

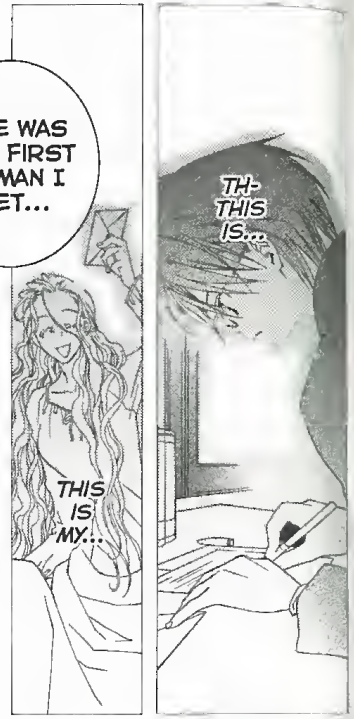
HE WOULD RETURN SMELLING LIKE RUST.
...HE'D GO OUT.
THEN, SOMETIMES...


...HE SMILED LIKE IT WAS SOMEHOW IRONIC, AND TOLD ME.
WHEN I SAID I'D NEVER ASKED HIS NAME...

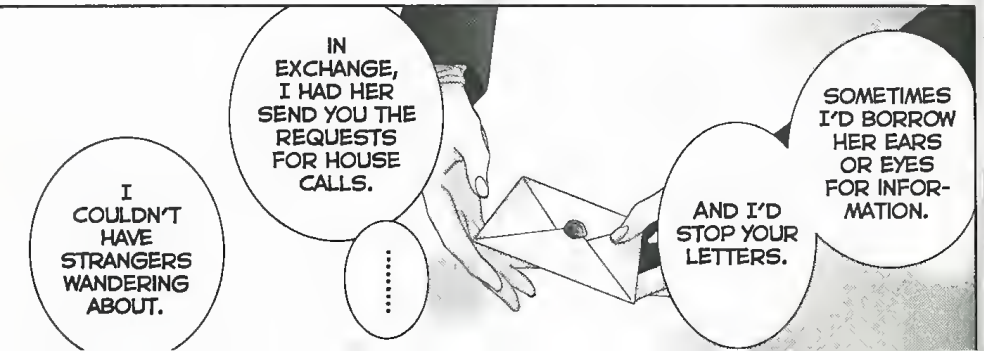
CAN I ASK YOU...
...ONE MORE THING?

!

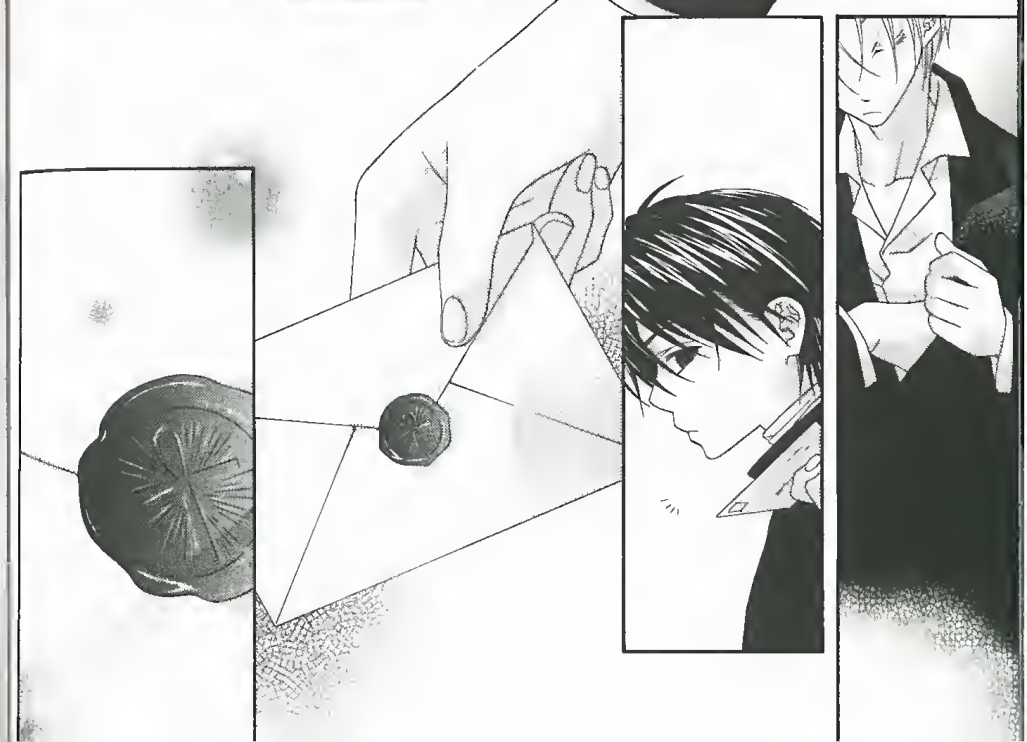
WE EX-CHANGED A SMALL AMOUNT OF BLOOD...
....AND PROM-ISED TO HELP EACH OTHER.
I NEEDED SOMEONE TO HELP ME.


SHE WAS THE FIRST HUMAN I MET...
...OUTSIDE THE VIL-LAGE.
THIS IS MY...

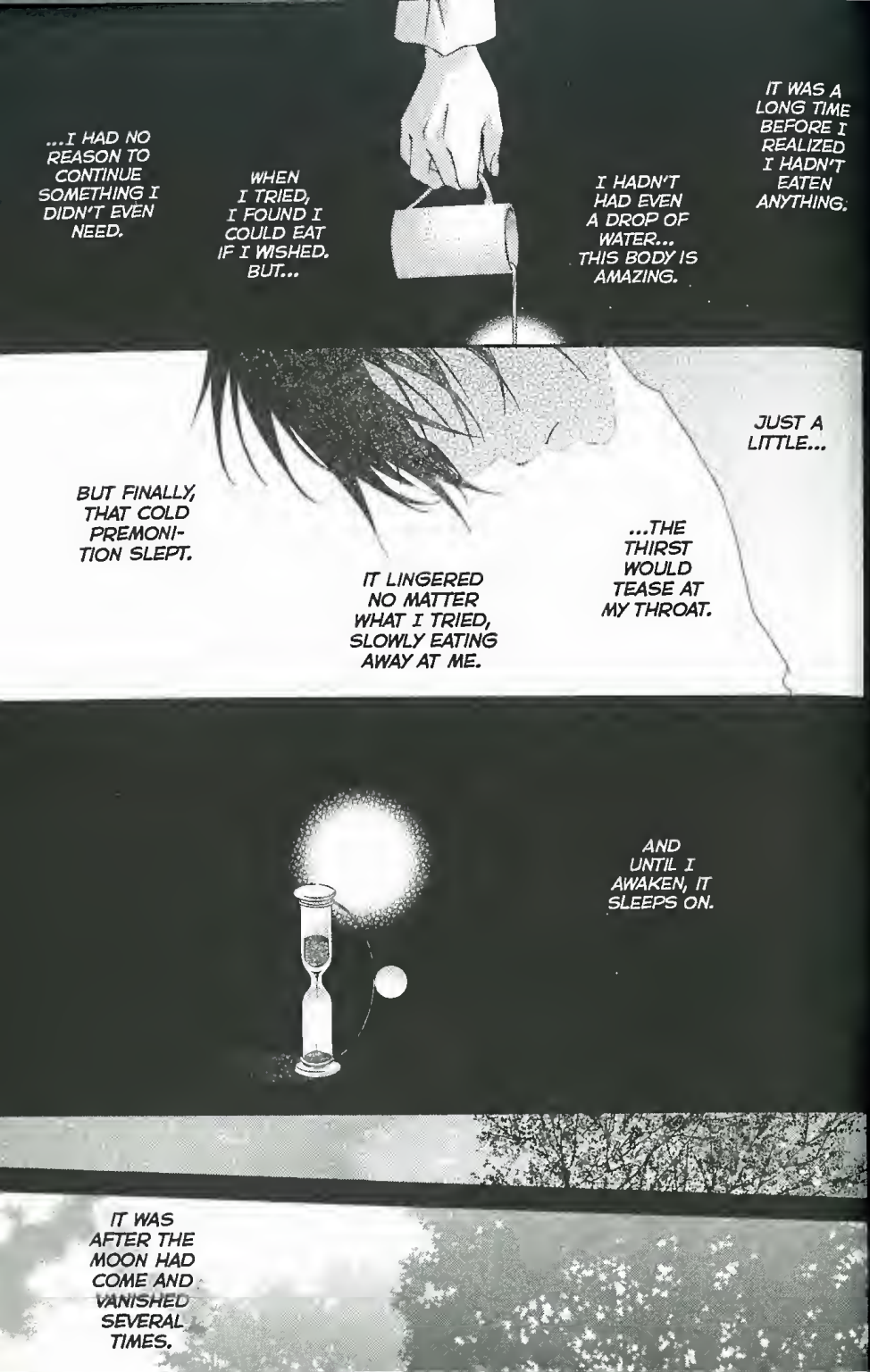
TH-THIS IS...

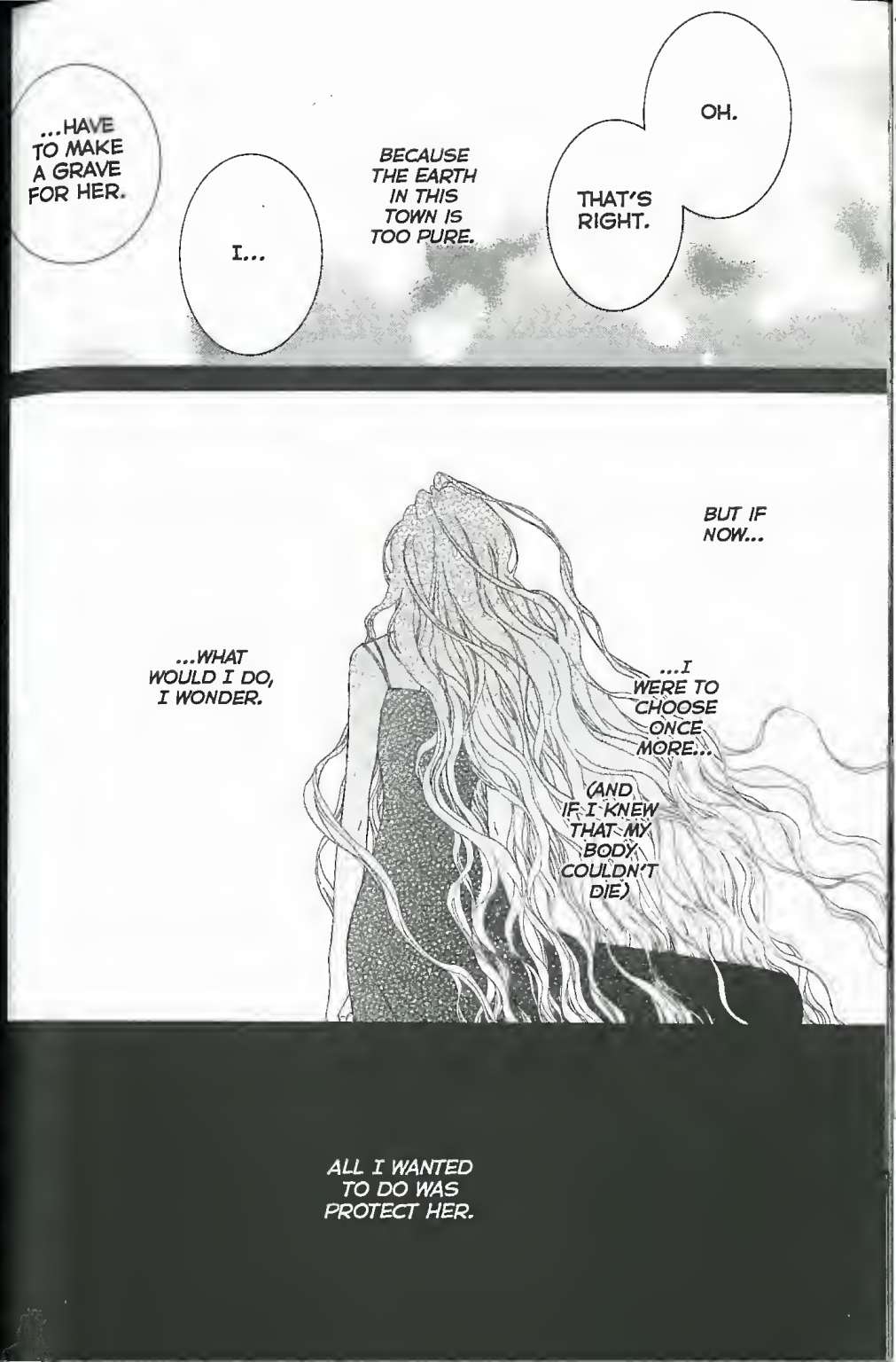

I COULDN'T HAVE STRANGERS WANDERING ABOUT.
IN EXCHANGE, I HAD HER SEND YOU THE REQUESTS FOR HOUSE CALLS.
.....
AND I'D STOP YOUR LETTERS.
SOMETIMES I'D BORROW HER EARS OR EYES FOR INFOR-MATION.

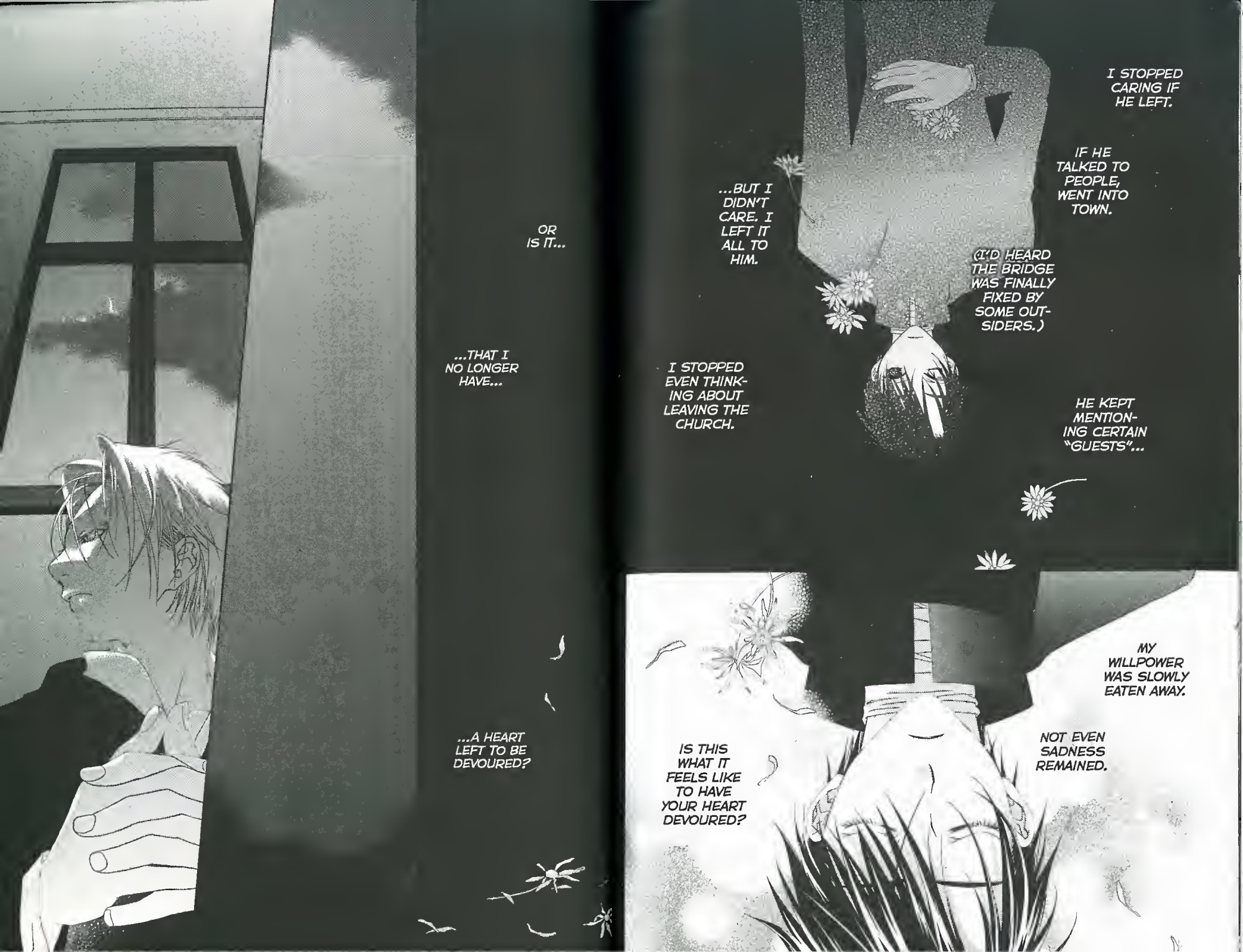
...DID YOU KNOW ABOUT HER?
HOW...
.....
WHAT DID YOU...
...DO TO HER?

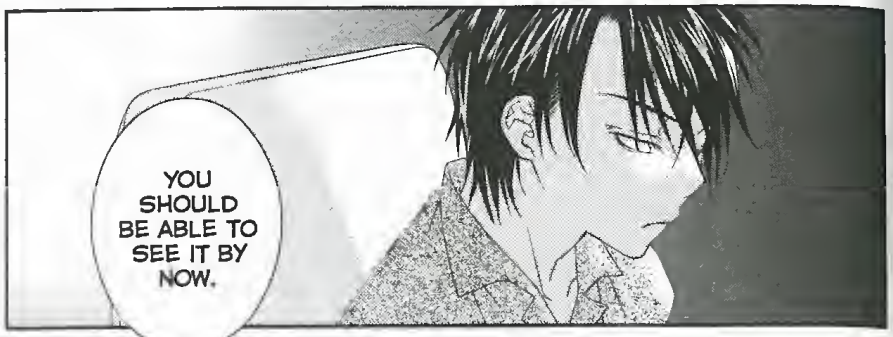


...AND BURNED HER.
...I WENT TO A SECLUDED PLACE...
...WERE BUSY GATHERING THE CORPSES...
YOU'RE LATE.
WHAT A DEMON SLAYER FEARS MORE THAN ANYTHING IS THE DEATH OF ONE'S OWN.
AND WORSE—THEIR RESURRECTION. IT'S ONLY BY FIRE THAT THE RESURRECTION CAN BE STOPPED.
EVEN THOUGH WE KNOW THAT, WE OF THE CHURCH LOOK DOWN ON CREMATION.
THIS VILLAGE IS ISOLATED FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD...
...AND STILL RETAINS THE OLD TRADITIONS.
I'VE FINALLY FOUND IT.
MY SPECIAL PLACE.
THAT'S WHY I CHOSE THIS PLACE.
DON'T TELL ME...
...YOU'RE HOPING FOR A MIRACLE.
WHAT HAPPENED TO HER?
DID YOU...
I SEE.
OF COURSE. YOU'LL USE ANYONE.
...STOP THEM?
A MIRACLE?
I SAID IT BEFORE, REMEMBER?
I HAVE SPECIAL POWERS.
DON'T GO GETTING YOUR HOPES UP—
WHILE YOU...
IF ONE LAST TIME...
WITH EYES AND HAIR OF A DIFFERENT COLOR.
...SHE'LL EVER COME BACK TO ME...
PERHAPS IF...


...I HAD NO REASON TO CONTINUE SOMETHING I DIDN'T EVEN NEED.
WHEN I TRIED, I FOUND I COULD EAT IF I WISHED. BUT...
I HADN'T HAD EVEN A DROP OF WATER... THIS BODY IS AMAZING.
IT WAS A LONG TIME BEFORE I REALIZED I HADN'T EATEN ANYTHING.
BUT FINALLY, THAT COLD PREMONI-TION SLEPT.
IT LINGERED NO MATTER WHAT I TRIED, SLOWLY EATING AWAY AT ME.
...THE THIRST WOULD TEASE AT MY THROAT.
JUST A LITTLE...
AND UNTIL I AWAKEN, IT SLEEPS ON.
IT WAS AFTER THE MOON HAD COME AND VANISHED SEVERAL TIMES.

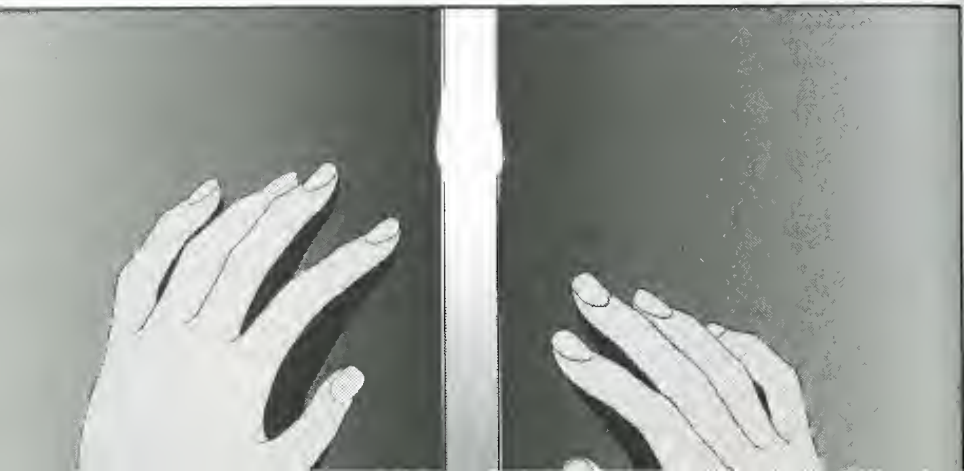

...HAVE TO MAKE A GRAVE FOR HER.
I...
BECAUSE THE EARTH IN THIS TOWN IS TOO PURE.
THAT'S RIGHT.
OH.
BUT IF NOW...
...WHAT WOULD I DO, I WONDER.
...I WERE TO CHOOSE ONCE MORE...
(AND IF I KNEW THAT MY BODY COULDN'T DIE)
ALL I WANTED TO DO WAS PROTECT HER.

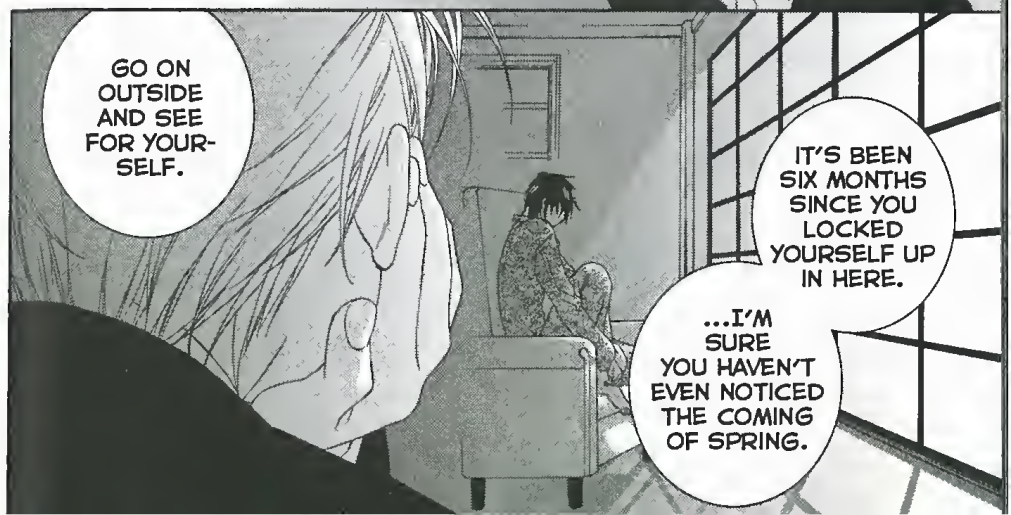

I STOPPED CARING IF HE LEFT.
IF HE TALKED TO PEOPLE, WENT INTO TOWN.
...BUT I DIDN'T CARE. I LEFT IT ALL TO HIM.
(I'D HEARD THE BRIDGE WAS FINALLY FIXED BY SOME OUTSIDERS.)
I STOPPED EVEN THINKING ABOUT LEAVING THE CHURCH.
HE KEPT MENTIONING CERTAIN "GUESTS"...
MY WILLPOWER WAS SLOWLY EATEN AWAY.
NOT EVEN SADNESS REMAINED.
IS THIS WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO HAVE YOUR HEART DEVOURED?
OR IS IT...
...THAT I NO LONGER HAVE...
...A HEART LEFT TO BE DEVOURED?



...WHAT DOES HE EXPECT ME TO SEE?

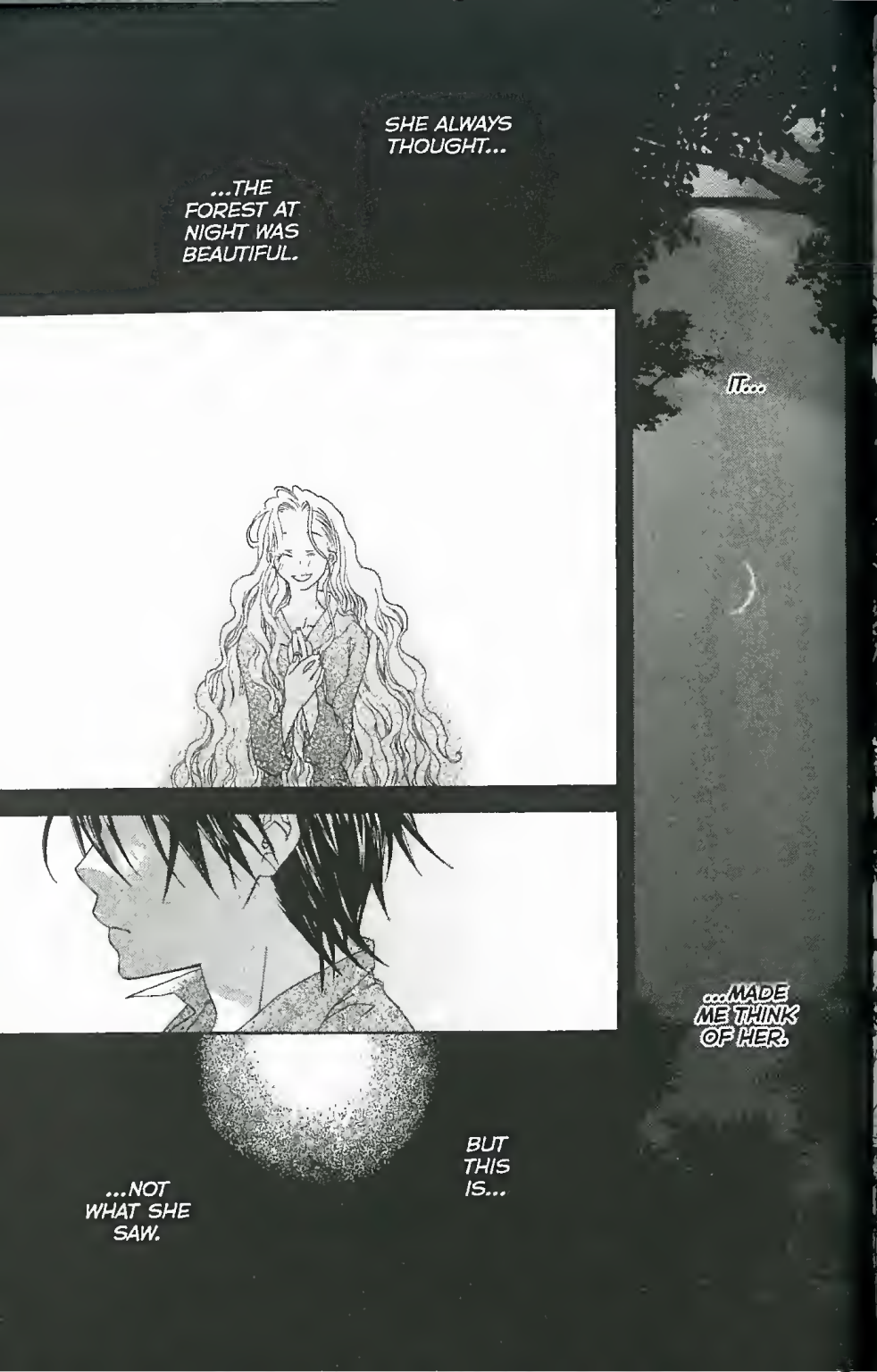
ON A NIGHT WHERE THE MOON IS BUT A SLIVER...



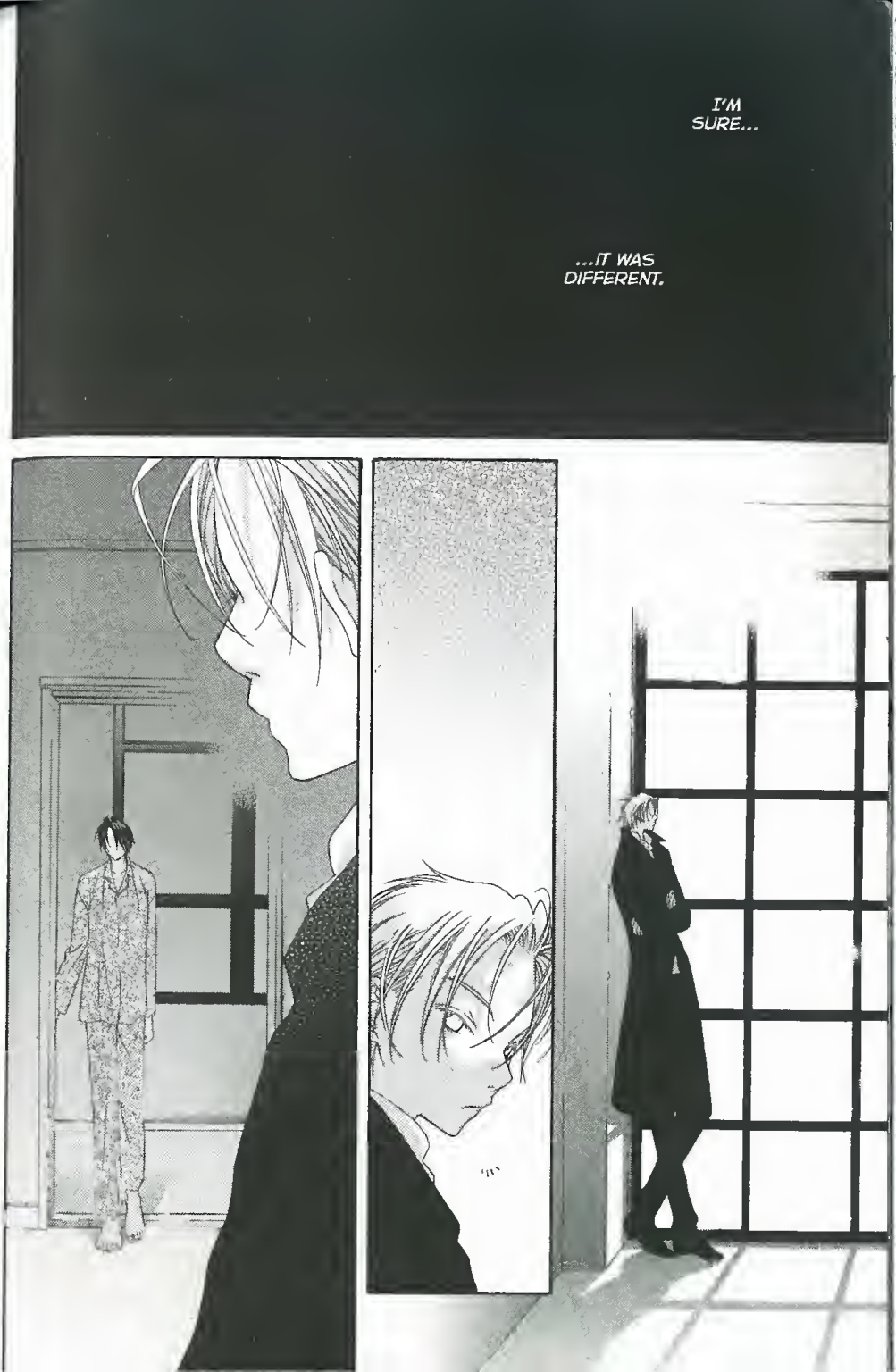

GO ON OUTSIDE AND SEE FOR YOURSELF.
IT'S BEEN SIX MONTHS SINCE YOU LOCKED YOURSELF UP IN HERE.
...I'M SURE YOU HAVEN'T EVEN NOTICED THE COMING OF SPRING.

IT'S
BRIGHT...?

BEAUTIFUL, ISN'T IT?
BEING ABLE TO SEE SOMETHING LIKE THIS...
...ALMOST MAKES SUCH AN ABOMINABLE BODY WORTH IT, WOULDN'T YOU SAY?


SHE ALWAYS THOUGHT...
...THE FOREST AT NIGHT WAS BEAUTIFUL.
IT...
...MADE ME THINK OF HER.
BUT THIS IS...
...NOT WHAT SHE SAW.

THE SHADOWS GLITTERING BLUE.
THIS DEEP AND HEAVY...
...SAPPHIRE.


I'M SURE...
...IT WAS DIFFERENT.

...AND BATHE ME IN THE FAINTEST RAY OF LIGHT.
...THIS DEEP, BLUE-SHADOWED NIGHT...
...WAS BEAUTIFUL ENOUGH TO WRING TEARS FROM MY HEART...
BUT EVEN SO...

THOUGH BY NOW I COULDN'T...

WANNA MAKE...

...A BET?

YOU...

...SAY WHAT IT WAS THAT I SAW.

TO BE CONTINUED IN VOLUME 5

Now then, this series has very little left to it, yet.

So if you'd all stick around with me for that, I'd be so happy.

But since my drawing pace is so slow, it won't be ending any time soon.

If possible, I want to construct it nice and crisp-like.

Well, until the next volume~

THANKS.

To all my editors

To my manager sama

My helpers

Esachi

Akizuki

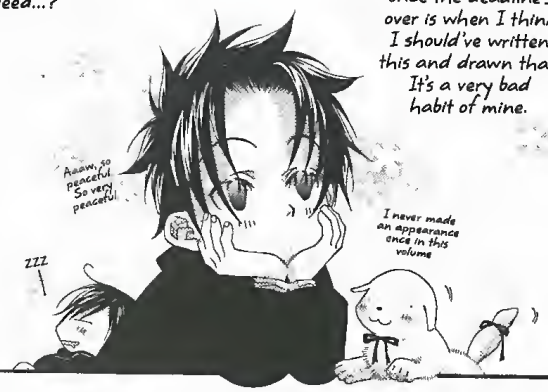
And to all those who read this!

Afterword

Even though the deadline's so close at hand, I haven't any material. This is always a problem.

At any rate, I've got two pages to fill, so what shall I do? What shall I do, indeed...?

Thinking about it, once the deadline's over is when I think I should've written this and drawn that. It's a very bad habit of mine.

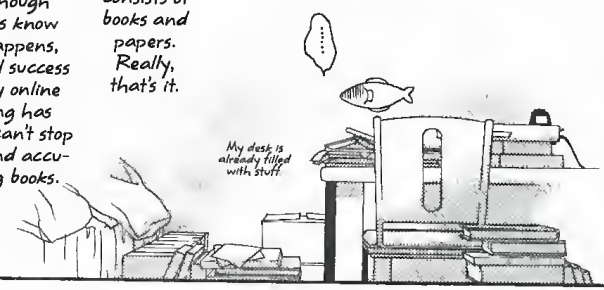


Recently

Even though I always know what happens, the initial success of all my online shopping has meant I can't stop buying and accumulating books.

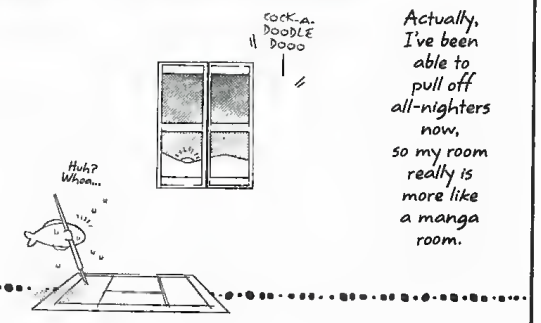
My room consists of books and papers. Really, that's it.

I really want to clean up my room, but I have no idea where I should start.



But since it's pretty hard on the body, I don't like to do it too much.

It's a fruitless manga room.



Actually, I've been able to pull off all-nighters now, so my room really is more like a manga room.

Continuation from the front page.
In reality, one page was enough for the bonus talk so this is a bonus of the bonus talk.

ABOUT THE FLOWERS ON THE COVER

I used a flower called "periwinkle" as reference for the flower. In reality it's a small flower of only about 5cm circumference and a purple color. But I took it upon myself to alter it a bit. I'd heard that in Western countries, this flower has the ominous nickname of "dead man's flower" and "criminal's flower." But its scientific name, "vinca" is Latin for "string" and could be called the flower that binds men and women. It was while staring at a botanical garden that I thought how good it would go with volume 4's cover.

While I'm at it, let me mention that the flower used for the cover of volume 3 was a Christmas Rose. I didn't even realize this, but it seems it's a poisonous flower. It really suits the two people on the cover, don't you think?
On cover 1...it was probably a chrysanthemum-type flower...and for volume 2, an anemone...? Without even necessarily thinking things through, I keep choosing the most appropriate flowers as material. For a while, I was really into botanical art but the details still get me. I need to strap myself down and learn better.

ABOUT THE ROSARY

In this flashback arc, Shikimi always keeps them close on his person.
But it seems that in real life, such things are not to be hung from the neck.
They are pretty much a chain of beads that, when you want to pray, you work through with your hands, counting your prayers.
And it seems...it's something Catholics carry with them.
Shikimi's a pastor. Pastors are those who lead the church in the Protestant faith.
Then there's the gaudily decorated Cross on the front inside flap.
This is yet another Catholic item...Sorry for using them all interchangeably like that.

ABOUT SHIKIMI'S EYELASHES

Why I rarely draw them when he has his black hair is because when I do, it makes him look like a girl for some reason.
When he's silver-haired, not so much but...I wonder why that is...

Anyway, it's very hard expressing the gold and the silver.
(Even when coloring. And, obviously, for the b/w interiors).
It just becomes a yellow and white color. Waaah.

BONUS TALK

THE FOREST AT NIGHT IS BEAUTIFUL

This is a very, very long story for me.
I think this is the longest story in the series. And there's soooo much dialogue. Too much, in fact. I wish I could have gotten rid of some of it. But I didn't have the time or the willpower to edit it after the issues came out.
Aaah...so I guess it's sort of a "what you see is what you get" type of thing.
Not just this volume, but others as well...I have a stack of corrections I'll get to eventually! At least, I hope I will...

Regarding the scene of the forest at night:
Production for this took an insane amount of time. For several days, all I was drawing were trees...
I never thought it'd take so long. And I don't think I ever want to do it again. But...I ended up drawing another one for the frontispiece (though in color, this time). The frontispiece...is supposed to be a night scene. But it's awfully bright. It just kind of happened that way.

Now about the title and logo design:
Designing the logo and splash words during the magazine serialization is my secret favorite pleasure. Though you don't get to see it when it gets compiled into the tankobon. My friends also very much liked the logo design for "The Forest at Night is Beautiful" and I enjoyed it from the "The Color of Water, the Blue of the Sea" chapter that got compiled into volume 3.

About Shikimi's eye color:
I admit I got carried away and started drawing his eyes in silver before the final chapter...sorry about that!

Shikimi's Cross:
The truth is, I forgot to draw it in the first time around, so I fixed it for the tankobon version. I hope nobody notices...
It's so easy to forget to draw crosses and rings.

BLACK-HAIRED SHIKIMI

25 years old. Doesn't age.

Like a completely different person from the silver-haired Shikimi we know.
Even his glasses are a little different.
I had a scene in mind for the end where he'd break them himself, but I decided not to go with it...
But since his eyes don't seem to be that bad...I guess it doesn't matter.

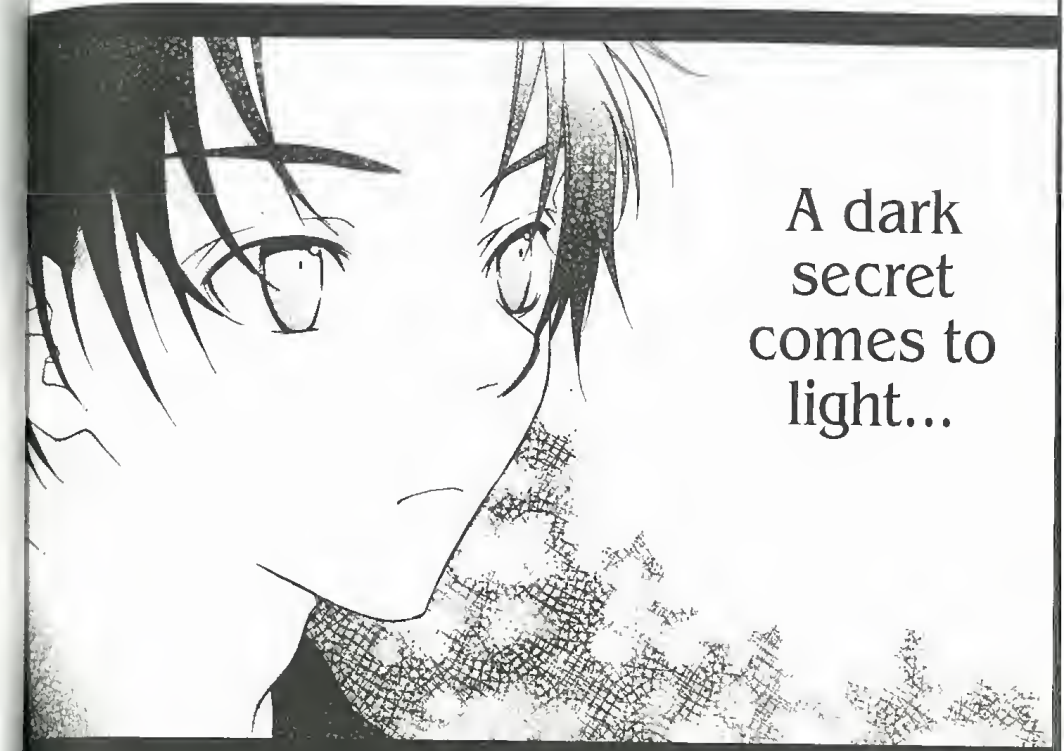
Translator's Notes

Pg. 21 – "I'm finished with my bath. Sorry for taking it first."
In Japanese tradition, the same bath water is often used by more than one person. Shikimi is apologizing for using it first.

Pg. 27 - I humbly receive
The equivalent to saying grace at a meal before eating, except without the religious connotation.

In Volume 5 of

BLACK SUN SILVER MOON



...and darker plans begin to form.